



National Portrait Gallery, London

ALFRED TENNYSON, 1838
by Samuel Laurence

Tennyson

AN INTRODUCTION AND A SELECTION BY

W. H. Auden



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Contents

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	ix

PART I POEMS AND BALLADS

Break, Break, Break	I
The Two Voices	I
The Revenge	16
From Will	20
Come Down, O Maid	20
Locksley Hall	21
Flower in the Crannied Wall	26
The Eagle	27
Despair.	27
The Voyage of Maeldune	33
Amphion	39
The Lady of Shalott.	42
Will Waterproof's Lyrical Monologue	47
The Progress of Spring	53
The Dying Swan	57
The Higher Pantheism	58
Rizpah	59
Mariana	63
Mariana in the South	65
From The Vision of Sin	68
Merlin and the Gleam	72

CONTENTS

PAGE

PART II

MAUD

76

PART III

IDYLLS ON CLASSICAL THEMES

The Lotos-Eaters	119
Choric Song	120
Demeter and Persephone	124
Ulysses	128
Tiresias.	130
Song from The Hesperides	134
Cenone	137
Tithonus	144

PART IV

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

147

PART V

SONGS AND OCCASIONAL PIECES

SONGS

1. A Rose, but one, none other rose had I,	238
2. Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;	238
3. A spirit haunts the year's last hours	238
4. Come not, when I am dead,	239
5. In Love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,	240
6. Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear	240
7. Light, so low upon earth,	240
8. Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;. . . .	241
9. O Swallow, Swallow, flying, flying south,	242
10. Our enemies have fallen, have fallen:	242
11. Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!	243

CONTENTS

	PAGE
12. Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,	244
13. The splendour falls on castle walls	244
14. Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;	245
In the Valley of Caunteretz	245
Helen's Tower	246
The Spiteful Letter	246
To E. L., on His Travels in Greece	247
From Prefatory Poem to My Brother's Sonnets	248
The Daisy	248
To E. Fitzgerald	252
Alcaics	253
Hendecasyllabics.	254
To Virgil	255
The Roses on the Terrace	256
Frater Ave Atque Vale	256
June Bracken and Heather	257
The New Timon and the Poets	257
Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington	259
Crossing the Bar	266

Introduction*

DURING THE LATTER HALF OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY there lived in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, a successful solicitor and business-man called George Tennyson. Robust, cheerful, interested in genealogy, he made and married money, became a member of Parliament, bought a country estate, and begat two sons, George and Charles. For reasons unknown he disinherited the elder and sent him, against his will, into the Church, making him Rector of Somersby. In 1805 the Reverend George Tennyson married Elizabeth Fytch, a clergyman's daughter with a taste for Felicia Hemans, begat eight sons and four daughters, and died in 1831. His sixth child and fourth son, born at midnight of August 6, 1809, was the poet.

Alfred Tennyson was sent to Louth Grammar School, where he was unusually unhappy; he was taken away and educated at home until 1828, when he went up to Trinity College, Cambridge. There he met Arthur Henry Hallam, belonged to a group of earnest young intellectuals who called themselves The Apostles, won the Chancellor's medal for a poem on Timbuctoo, and went down in 1831 without taking his degree. He had, however, already published two books. *Poems by Two Brothers*, written in collaboration with his brother Frederick, had been published by a Louth bookseller in 1827, and his *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, by Moxon, a London publisher, in 1830.

In the summer of 1830 he made a curious journey with Hallam to the Pyrenees to take money from English sympa-

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thizers to a Spanish revolutionary general, his first and last excursion into practical politics, and his first and apparently fatal contact with France.

In December 1832 Moxon published *Poems*, which contained an epigram attacking Christopher North for his review of the 1830 volume. Partly on this account, and partly, perhaps, out of irritation at the uncritical admiration of Tennyson's friends, Lockhart wrote a review in the *Edinburgh Quarterly* of such effective virulence that for some years people were ashamed to be caught reading Tennyson. In the same year, on October 1, Tennyson received news of Hallam's sudden death in Vienna. For the next ten years he published no book, had no regular occupation, drank port, smoked strong tobacco, and was poor and unhappy. He became engaged to his future wife; the engagement was broken off. Somersby Rectory was sold; he moved to the neighbourhood of London. He invested his capital and his mother's in the project of a certain Dr. Allen for making wood carving by machinery; the project failed. But at this time he was writing, and in 1842 *Poems* appeared which established his reputation with the intelligentsia and the critics. In 1846 the grant of a pension from the Civil List made him financially secure, and in 1850 he published his masterpiece *In Memoriam*, married, and succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate.

From then on he led the life of a famous author. He bought a house in the Isle of Wight, he wrote, he grew a beard, he visited Queen Victoria at Osborne, he built another house in Surrey, he went on writing, he visited the Queen at Windsor, he was gazetted to the Peerage, he still wrote. On October 8, 1892, he died, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

He had a large, loose-limbed body, a swarthy complexion, a high, narrow forehead, and huge bricklayer's hands; in youth he looked like a gypsy; in age like a dirty old monk; he had the finest ear, perhaps, of any English poet; he was also undoubtedly the stupidest; there was little about melancholia that he didn't know; there was little else that he did.

In his excellent study of the poet,* Mr. Harold Nicolson divides his literary development into four phases.

The first, which extends from the *Poems by Two Brothers* in 1827 to the publication of the 1842 volume, represents his luxuriant period—the period in which, whatever people may say, he was under the influence of Keats and, in a lesser degree, of Coleridge. He sings throughout to “one clear harp in divers tones,” but beautiful as the poems are, there is little impression of any central or directing purpose or inspiration. The second phase, which the first slightly overlaps, begins with the death of Hallam in 1833 and concludes with *Maud* in 1855. To this period, which is clearly the most important of the four, belong *The Two Voices*, and *Break, Break, Break*, which were actually published in the 1842 volume, *The Princess* in 1847, and *In Memoriam* in 1850. The magnificent *Ode to the Duke of Wellington*, which appeared in 1852, falls also within this period. With 1857 we come to the third, the unfortunate mid-Victorian phase of Tennyson’s development, and we enter upon the series of the *Idylls*, the *Enoch Arden* poems of 1864, *The Holy Grail* of 1869, and the final *Idylls* of 1872. From 1873 onward there is an interval in which the Laureate was occupied, with amazing obstinacy, in writing plays, but in 1880, the fourth and last period, the splendid *Aldworth* period, opens with *Ballads and Other Poems*, with *Rizpah*, and *Lucknow* and *De Profundis*. In 1885 we find *Tiresias* and the *Ancient Sage* and the lines to Fitzgerald, and the period closes only with the posthumous publication of *The Death of Ænone* in 1892.

It is important, I think, clearly to mark the difference between these four periods. For whereas the early period has given us things like *Mariana* and *The Lady of Shalott*; whereas the second period has revealed to us the essential lyrical inspiration of Tennyson, and convinced us of his greatness and permanence as a poet; whereas the last period is a magnificent monument to his vitality and his mastery of language; the third period, the mid-Victorian period, can make no appeal whatsoever to the modern mind. And, unfortunately, it is by this third period, the Farringford period, by the *Idylls* and *Enoch Arden*, that he is condemned. And that this should be so is both unfair and unintelligent.

* Tennyson, *Aspects of His Life, Character, and Poetry*. (Constable, 1925.) See also the introduction to the Tennyson volume in the Nelson Classics, by T. S. Eliot. Reprinted under the title of *In Memoriam* in *Essays Ancient and Modern*. (Faber & Faber).

We must not, however, make the mistake of concluding from this that the Victorians had exceptionally bad taste and did not appreciate these poems of Tennyson which we think good, or that we are any better judges of our own contemporaries. A poet may write bad poetry in three ways. He may be bored or in a hurry and write work which is technically slipshod or carelessly expressed. From this fault, of which Shakespeare is not infrequently guilty, Tennyson is quite free. Secondly, by overlooking verbal and visual associations he may be unintentionally funny at a serious moment; e.g., in describing the martyrdom of St. Stephen, Tennyson writes:

But looking upward, full of grace,
He pray'd, and from a happy place
God's glory smote him on the face.

And in his dedicatory poem to Lord Dufferin, on whose yacht his own son had died:

But ere he left your fatal shore,
And lay on that funereal boat,
Dying, "Unspeakable" he wrote
"Their kindness," and he wrote no more;

Thirdly, he may suffer from a corruption of his own consciousness and produce work the badness of which strikes the reader as intentional; i.e., in the case of carelessness or accidental bathos, one feels it would only have to be pointed out to the poet for the latter to recognize it instantly, but in the case of this kind of badness one feels certain that the poet is very pleased with it. The faults, for instance, of the following extracts, could not be cured by literary criticism alone; they involve Tennyson's personality:

Love for the maiden, crown'd with marriage, no regrets for aught
that has been,
Household happiness, gracious children, debtless competence,
golden mean;

For think not, tho' thou wouldst not love thy lord,
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.

INTRODUCTION

I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame. . . .
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die . . .
Lo, I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives: do thou for thine own soul the rest.

Kiss in the bower,
Tit on the tree!
Bird mustn't tell,
Whoop! he can see.

For poetry which is bad in this essential sense, there are different specific causes in each case, but they may all, perhaps, be included in one basic error; trash is the inevitable result whenever a person tries to do for himself or for others by the writing of poetry what can only be done in some other way, by action, or study, or prayer. That is why so many adolescents write poetry. Those who have no poetic gift quickly give it up, but those who have talent, and hence discover that *something* can be achieved by artistic creation, namely a consciousness of what one really feels, remain subject to the temptation to think that everything can be achieved in this way; the elimination, for example, of unpleasant or disgraceful feelings, particularly if they are talented enough to acquire a professional status and rich enough to need no other occupation. This temptation was, in Tennyson's case, particularly acute. In the first place, his genius was lyrical, and the lyric poet is perpetually confronted with the problem of what to do with his time between the few hours when he is visited by his muse. If Tennyson, like others before and after him, occupied himself from his fiftieth to his seventieth year with epic and dramatic forms for which he had no talent whatsoever,* it would be unjust to attribute this wholly or even mainly to a

* If England had only possessed in the nineteenth century an operatic composer of the rank of Verdi or Wagner, Tennyson might have found in the libretto a medium at once lyrical and dramatic. *Maud*, a libretto *manqué*, is an indication of what gifts he had in that direction. He is one of the few poets who has been able to write poetry which is meaningful in itself and at the same time settable to music.

conceited ambition to rival Milton and Shakespeare; one, by no means the least important, factor was certainly the laudable wish not to be as idle in the second half of his life as he had been in the first. As we know from the lives of other lyric poets the alternative to writing long, unreadable poems is apt to be the less innocent and not necessarily more fruitful pastime of debauchery.

And, in the second place, the feelings which his gift revealed to Tennyson were almost entirely those of lonely terror and desire for death—from the *Song* written when he was still an undergraduate.

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
 An hour before death;
My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,
 And the breath
 Of the fading edges of box beneath,
And the year's last rose.

to *Demeter* written when he was nearly eighty.

. and see no more,
The Stone, the Wheel, the dimly-glimmering lawns,
Of that Elysium, all the hateful fires
Of torment, and the shadowy warrior glide
Along the silent field of Asphodel.

The note successfully struck is consistently that of numb elegaic sadness. Nietzsche's description of Wagner applies in a lesser degree to Tennyson too:

Nobody can approach him in the colours of late Autumn, in the indescribably touching joy of a last, a very last, and all too short gladness; he knows of a chord which expresses those secret and weird midnight hours of the soul when cause and effect seem to have fallen asunder and at every moment something may spring out of nonentity. . . . He knows that weary shuffling along of the soul which is no longer able either to spring or to fly, nay which is no longer able to walk . . . his spirit prefers to squat peacefully in the corners of broken-down houses: concealed in

INTRODUCTION

this way, and hidden even from himself, he paints his really great masterpieces, all of which are very short, often only one bar in length—there only does he become quite good, great and perfect, perhaps there alone. . . .

When one begins to make a selection from Tennyson's work, one is startled by the similarity of the symbolic situations his best poems present. One can almost construct an archetypal pattern and say that the Tennysonian subject must contain one or more of the following elements:

1) An act of desertion, whether by marriage or by death; e.g., *Mariana* and *Ænone* (desertion of a woman by a man), *In Memoriam* (desertion of a man by a man), *Rizpah* (desertion of a mother by a son), *Demeter* and *Persephone* (desertion of a mother by a daughter), *Despair* (desertion by God).

2) An insensitive, cruel other; e.g., *Ænone* (Aphrodite), *Locksley Hall* (husband), *Maud* (brother), *Rizpah* (The Law).

3) An accidental crime committed by the hero; e.g., *Oriana*, *Maud*, *Tiresias*.

4) A thief; e.g., *Maud* (grandfather), *Despair* (son).

5) A contrast of landscape. The barren landscape of loneliness and passion (rocks and sea) versus the fertile landscape of coziness and calm (village and river plain).

In no other English poet of comparable rank does the bulk of his work seem so clearly to be inspired by some single and probably very early experience.

Tennyson's own description of himself as

An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry.

is extraordinarily acute. If Wordsworth is the great English poet of Nature, then Tennyson is the great English poet of the Nursery, of

*das ungewisse Licht von Nachmittagen
in denen man sich furchtete als Kind.*

i.e., his poems deal with human emotions in their most primitive states, uncomplicated by conscious sexuality or

intellectual rationalization. (No other poetry is easier, and less illuminating, to psycho-analyse.)

Two admissions of Tennyson's, that the first poetry which excited him was his own, and that at the age of five he used to walk about saying 'Alfred, Alfred', are significant, as are his lines on science.

Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men.

Two questions: Who am I? Why do I exist? and the panic fear of their remaining unanswered—doubt is much too intellectual and tame a term for such a vertigo of anxiety—seem to have obsessed him all his life. Why he should have felt them so strongly and at such an early age we cannot, of course, know, but it seems not unlikely that his experience was similar to one described by Kierkegaard in his Journals.

The greatest danger is not that his father or his tutor should be a free-thinker, not even his being a hypocrite. No, the danger lies in his being a pious, God-fearing man, and in the child being convinced thereof, but that he should nevertheless notice that deep in his soul there lies hidden an unrest which, consequently, not even the fear of God and piety could calm. The danger is that the child in that situation is almost provoked to draw a conclusion about God, that God is not infinite love.

But whatever the initiating cause, Tennyson became conscious in childhood of Hamlet's problem, the religious significance of his own existence. Emotions of early childhood are hard to express except accidentally because the original events associated with them are not remembered. Hallam's death, a repetition of the abandonment experience, gave Tennyson the symbolic event which mobilized what he had already suffered and gave his fear a focus and a *raison d'être*. St. Augustine gives an illuminating account of a similar experience.

Thus I was wretched, and my wretched life was dearer to me than my friend had been. Gladly as I would have changed it, I would rather have been deprived of my friend than of my grief.

INTRODUCTION

. . . I was sick of living, yet afraid to die. I suppose that the intensity of my love made death, which has robbed me of him, seem hateful and dreadful, like some horrid enemy; and I thought that it must soon destroy all men because it had slain him. . . . I marvelled that other men should be alive since he was dead whom I had loved as if he could never die, and I marvelled still more that I, his other self, should be alive when he was dead. Well did the poet say of his friend: "O thou half of my soul." For I felt that my soul and his had been but one in two bodies; and life seemed horrible to me, because I was cut in two. And, perhaps, that is why I feared to die, lest the other half of him whom I had loved so dearly, should perish.

Confessions, Book IV, Chap. 6.

||In this basic anxiety about his existence Tennyson is the brother of another and greater nineteenth-century poet, Baudelaire,||and it may not be unrewarding to compare these two figures, superficially so dissimilar yet fundamentally so alike, ||the provincial Englishman with his terror of political and domestic disorder and the cosmopolitan satanic dandy of Paris.||These lines

And crowds that stream from yawning doors,
And shoals of puckered faces drive;
Dark hulks that tumble half alive,
And lazy lengths on boundless shores;

Bitter barmaid, waning fast!
See the sheets are on my bed.

He seems as one whose footsteps halt,
Toiling in immeasurable sand,
And o'er a weary sultry land,
Far beneath a blazing vault,
Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,
The city sparkles like a grain of salt.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are seal'd;
I strove against the stream and all in vain;
Let the great river take me to the main.
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
Ask me no more.

are closer in spirit to

*Un damné descendant sans lampe,
Au bord d'un gouffre dont l'odeur
Trahit l'humide profondeur,
D'éternels escaliers sans rampe,*

*Le beau valet de cœur et la dame de pique
Causent sinistrement de leurs amours défunts.*

*Et mon esprit, toujours du vertige hanté,
Jalouse du néant l'insensibilité.*

—Ah! ne jamais sortir des Nombres et des Êtres!

than to any other English poetry.

In their verse technique, both display the same musical ear and love of 'line.* (Pope is to Tennyson what Racine is to Baudelaire.) Both felt themselves to be exiles from a lost paradise, desert dwellers (the barren rocks and desolate fens of Tennyson correspond to the gas-lit Paris of Baudelaire); both shared the same nostalgia for the Happy Isles, *le vert paradis des amours enfantines*, to be reached only after long voyages over water; both imagine Eden in the same Rousseauistic terms; i.e., as a place of natural innocence rather than supernatural illumination.

But in their conceptions of how to endure this present life, in which direction to sail, they part company.

Baudelaire wrote:

*Je plains les poètes que guide le seul instinct; je les crois incomplètes . . .
L'homme de génie a les nerfs solides; l'enfant les a faibles. Chez un la
raison a pris une place considérable; chez l'autre, la sensibilité occupe
presque tout l'être.*

If Baudelaire became the greater poet, it was not because his initial sensibility was any keener than Tennyson's, but because in addition he developed a first-rate critical intelli-

* It is interesting to speculate on the relation between the strictness and musicality of a poet's form and his own anxiety. It may well be, I think, that the more he is conscious of an inner disorder and dread, the more value he will place on tidiness in the work as a *défense*, as if he hoped that through his control of the means of expressing his emotions, the emotions themselves, which he cannot master directly, might be brought to order.

INTRODUCTION

gence which prevented him from writing an epic about Roland or a tragedy about Joan of Arc to escape from his vision of the abyss! On the other hand, it led him into an error which Tennyson escaped—the error of making a religion of the aesthetic.

Baudelaire was right in seeing that art is beyond good and evil, and Tennyson was a fool to try to write a poetry which would teach the Ideal; but Tennyson was right in seeing that an art which is beyond good and evil is a game of secondary importance, and Baudelaire was the victim of his own pride in persuading himself that a mere game was

*le meilleur témoignage
que nous puissions donner de notre dignité.*

Thus if Tennyson embarrasses us by picturing Paradise as an exact replica of Somersby Rectory or Torquay, he has at least a conception, however naïve, of a *good* place, and does not, like Baudelaire, insist that its goodness and badness are unimportant, for all that matters is its novelty, to be attained at whatever cost by a cultivation of hysteria with delight and terror.

The same difference shows itself in their respective attitudes to society and personal relations. Both were profoundly lonely men who viewed the loud, gregarious extrovert with fear and distaste. The Tennyson who wrote

. . . and in one month

They wedded her to sixty thousand pounds
To lands in Kent and messuages in York,
And slight Sir Robert with his watery smile
And educated whisker.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.

is close to the Baudelaire who hated *l'esprit belge*. And what is *Ulysses* but a covert—the weakness of the poem is its indirection—refusal to be a responsible and useful person, a glorification of the heroic dandy? ||

Rejecting the bourgeois parody of marriage and home,

INTRODUCTION

both sought impossible extremes, but in opposite directions. Tennyson dreamed of an affectionate circle without conflict, the coziness of childhood (in all his praise of marriage there is no sense of a historical relation between individuals); Baudelaire, judging a relation by its intensity alone, thought only of a childless sexual relation from which cruelty was inseparable.

The aspects of Tennyson that are now so distasteful to us, the 'schoolmistress Alfred' of *The Miller's Daughter* and *Guinevere*, the schoolboy Froggie-hater of *Riflemen, Form*, are the counterpart of the 'shocking' Baudelaire to whom the sole pleasure in love was the knowledge of doing evil and who hoped to conquer solitude by inspiring universal horror and disgust. If the latter's pose still appeals to us, it is because it flatters our modern forms of egoism in the same way that the former's flattered the Victorians, for both are attempts to evade the need for a religious faith by finding some form of magical certainty, and both lead to disaster, the one, as Baudelaire himself realized too late, to hearing the 'wind of the wing of madness,' the other to an infantile torpor, a 'glory without history, the poetic character more worn than paid for, or at least more saved than spent.'

W. H. AUDEN.

PART I
POEMS AND BALLADS

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

BREAK, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, Break, Break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

1833

THE TWO VOICES

A STILL small voice spake unto me,
'Thou art so full of misery
Were it not better not to be?'

Then to the still small voice I said:
'Let me not cast in endless shade
What is so wonderfully made.'

To which the voice did urge reply:
'To-day I saw the dragon-fly
Come from the wells where he did lie.

'An inner impulse rent the veil
Of his old husk; from head to tail
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.

'He dried his wings: like gauze they grew;
Thro' crofts and pastures wet with dew
A living flash of light he flew.'

I said: 'When first the world began,
Young Nature thro' five cycles ran,
And in the sixth she moulded man.

'She gave him mind, the lordliest
Proportion, and, above the rest,
Dominion in the head and breast.'

Thereto the silent voice replied:
'Self-blinded are you by your pride;
Look up thro' night; the world is wide.

'This truth within thy mind rehearse,
That in a boundless universe
Is boundless better, boundless worse.

'Think you this mould of hopes and fears
Could find no statelier than his peers
In yonder hundred million spheres?'

It spake, moreover, in my mind:
'Tho' thou wert scatter'd to the wind,
Yet is there plenty of the kind.'

Then did my response clearer fall:
'No compound of this earthly ball
Is like another, all in all.'

To which he answer'd scoffingly:
'Good soul! suppose I grant it thee,
Who'll weep for thy deficiency?

'Or will one beam be less intense,
When thy peculiar difference
Is cancell'd in the world of sense?'

I would have said, 'Thou canst not know,'
But my full heart, that work'd below,
Rain'd thro' my sight its overflow.

Again the voice spake unto me:
'Thou art so steep'd in misery,
Surely 'twere better not to be.

'Thine anguish will not let thee sleep,
Nor any train of reason keep;
Thou canst not think, but thou wilt weep.'

I said: 'The years with change advance;
If I make dark my countenance,
I shut my life from happier chance.

'Some turn this sickness yet might take,
Ev'n yet.' But he: 'What drug can make
A wither'd palsy cease to shake?'

I wept: 'Tho' I should die, I know
That all about the thorn will blow
In tufts of rosy-tinted snow;

'And men, thro' novel spheres of thought
Still moving after truth long sought,
Will learn new things when I am not.'

'Yet,' said the secret voice, 'some time,
Sooner or later, will gray prime
Make thy grass hoar with early rime.

'Not less swift souls that yearn for light,
Rapt after heaven's starry flight,
Would sweep the tracts of day and night.

'Not less the bee would range her cells,
The furzy prickly fire the dells,
The foxglove cluster dappled bells.'

I said that 'all the years invent;
Each month is various to present
The world with some development.

'Were this not well to bide mine hour,
Tho' watching from a ruin'd tower
How grows the day of human power?'

'The highest-mounted mind,' he said,
'Still sees the sacred morning spread
The silent summit overhead.

'Will thirty seasons render plain
Those lonely nights that still remain,
Just breaking over land and main?

'Or make that morn, from his cold crown
And crystal silence creeping down,
Flood with full daylight glebe and town?

'Forerun thy peers, thy time, and let
Thy feet, milleniums hence, be set
In midst of knowledge, dream'd not yet.

'Thou hast not gain'd a real height,
Nor art thou nearer to the light,
Because the scale is infinite.

' 'Twere better not to breathe or speak,
Than cry for strength, remaining weak,
And seem to find, but still to seek.

'Moreover, but to seem to find
Asks what thou lackest, thought resign'd,
A healthy frame, a quiet mind.'

I said: 'When I am gone away,
'He dared not tarry,' men will say,
Doing dishonour to my clay.'

'This is more vile,' he made reply,
'To breathe and loathe, to live and sigh,
Than once from dread of pain to die.

POEMS AND BALLADS

'Sick art thou—a divided will
Still heaping on the fear of ill
The fear of men, a coward still.

'Do men love thee? Art thou so bound
To men that how thy name may sound
Will vex thee lying underground?

'The memory of the wither'd leaf
In endless time is scarce more brief
Than of the garner'd Autumn-sheaf.

'Go, vexed spirit, sleep in trust;
The right ear that is fill'd with dust
Hears little of the false or just.'

'Hard task, to pluck resolve,' I cried,
'From the emptiness and the waste wide
Of that abyss, or scornful pride!

'Nay—rather yet that I could raise
One hope that warm'd me in the days
While still I yearn'd for human praise.

'When, wide in soul and bold of tongue,
Among the tents I paused and sung,
The distant battle flash'd and rung.

'I sung the joyful Pæan clear,
And sitting, burnish'd without fear
The brand, the buckler, and the spear—

'Waiting to strive a happy strife,
To war with falsehood to the knife,
And not to lose the good of life—

'Some hidden principle to move,
To put together, part and prove,
And mete the bounds of hate and love—

'As far as might be, to carve out
Free space for every human doubt,
That the whole mind might orb about—

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

'To search thro' all I felt or saw,
The springs of life, the depths of awe,
And reach the law within the law;

'At least, not rotting like a weed,
But, having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful of further thought and deed,

'To pass when Life her light withdraws,
Not void of righteous self-applause,
Nor in a merely selfish cause—

'In some good cause, not in mine own,
To perish, wept for, honour'd, known,
And like a warrior overthrown;

'Whose eyes are dim with glorious tears,
When, soil'd with noble dust, he hears
His country's war song thrill his ears:

'Then dying of a mortal stroke,
What time the foeman's line is broke,
And all the war is roll'd in smoke.'

'Yea!' said the voice, 'thy dream was good,
While thou abodest in the bud
It was the stirring of the blood.

'If Nature put not forth her power
About the opening of the flower,
Who is it that could live an hour?

'Then comes the check, the change, the fall,
Pain rises up, old pleasures pall.
There is one remedy for all.

'Yet hadst thou, thro' enduring pain,
Link'd month to month with such a chain
Of knitted purport, all were vain.

'Thou hadst not between death and birth
Dissolved the riddle of the earth.
So were thy labour little-worth.

POEMS AND BALLADS

'That men with knowledge merely play'd,
I told thee—hardly nigher made,
Tho' scaling slow from grade to grade;

'Much less this dreamer, deaf and blind,
Named man, may hope some truth to find,
That bears relation to the mind.

'For every worm beneath the moon
Draws different threads, and late and soon
Spins, toiling out his own cocoon.

'Cry, faint not: either Truth is born
Beyond the polar gleam forlorn,
Or in the gateways of the morn.

'Cry, faint not, climb: the summits slope
Beyond the furthest flights of hope,
Wrapt in dense cloud from base to cope.

'Sometimes a little corner shines,
As over rainy mist inclines
A gleaming crag with belts of pines.

'I will go forward, sayest thou,
I shall not fail to find her now.
Look up, the fold is on her brow.

'If straight thy track, or if oblique,
Thou know'st not. Shadows thou dost strike,
Embracing cloud, Ixion-like;

'And owning but a little more
Than beasts, abidest lame and poor,
Calling thyself a little lower

'Than angels. Cease to wail and brawl!
Why inch by inch to darkness crawl?
There is one remedy for all.'

'O dull, one-sided voice,' said I,
'Wilt thou make everything a lie,
To flatter me that I may die?

'I know that age to age succeeds,
Blowing a noise of tongues and deeds,
A dust of systems and of creeds.

'I cannot hide that some have striven,
Achieving calm, to whom was given
The joy that mixes man with Heaven;

'Who, rowing hard against the stream,
Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream;

'But heard, by secret transport led,
Ev'n in the charnels of the dead,
The murmur of the fountain-head—

'Which did accomplish their desire,
Bore and forbore, and did not tire,
Like Stephen, an unquenched fire.

'He heeded not reviling tones,
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
Tho' cursed and scorn'd, and bruised with stones;

'But looking upward, full of grace,
He pray'd, and from a happy place
God's glory smote him on the face.'

The sullen answer slid betwixt:
'Not that the grounds of hope were fix'd,
The elements were kindlier mix'd.'

I said: 'I toil beneath the curse,
But, knowing not the universe,
I fear to slide from bad to worse;

'And that, in seeking to undo
One riddle, and to find the true,
I knit a hundred others new;

'Or that this anguish fleeting hence,
Unmanacled from bonds of sense,
Be fix'd and froz'n to permanence:

'For I go, weak from suffering here;
Naked I go, and void of cheer:
What is it that I may not fear?'

'Consider well,' the voice replied,
'His face, that two hours since hath died;
Wilt thou find passion, pain or pride?

'Will he obey when one commands?
Or answer should one press his hands?
He answers not, nor understands.

'His palms are folded on his breast;
There is no other thing express'd
But long disquiet merged in rest.

'His lips are very mild and meek;
Tho' one should smite him on the cheek,
And on the mouth, he will not speak.

'His little daughter, whose sweet face
He kiss'd, taking his last embrace,
Becomes dishonour to her race—

'His sons grow up that bear his name,
Some grow to honour, some to shame,—
But he is chill to praise or blame.

'He will not hear the north-wind rave,
Nor, moaning, household shelter crave
From winter rains that beat his grave.

'High up the vapours fold and swim;
About him broods the twilight dim;
The place he knew forgetteth him.'

'If all be dark, vague voice,' I said,
'These things are wrapt in doubt and dread,
Nor canst thou show the dead are dead.

'The sap dries up: the plant declines.
A deeper tale my heart divines.
Know I not death? the outward signs?

'I found him when my years were few;
A shadow on the graves I knew,
And darkness in the village yew.

'From grave to grave the shadow crept;
In her still place the morning wept;
Touch'd by his feet the daisy slept.

'The simple senses crown'd his head:
"Omega! thou art Lord," they said,
"We find no motion in the dead!"

'Why, if man rot in dreamless ease,
Should that plain fact, as taught by these,
Not make him sure that he shall cease?

'Who forged that other influence,
That heat of inward evidence,
By which he doubts against the sense?

'He owns the fatal gift of eyes,
That read his spirit blindly wise,
Not simple as a thing that dies.

'Here sits he shaping wings to fly;
His heart forebodes a mystery;
He names the name Eternity.

'That type of Perfect in his mind
In Nature can he nowhere find.
He sows himself on every wind.

'He seems to hear a Heavenly Friend,
And thro' thick veils to apprehend
A labour working to an end.

'The end and the beginning vex
His reason: many things perplex,
With motions, checks, and counterchecks.

'He knows a baseness in his blood,
At such strange war with something good,
He may not do the thing he would.

'Heaven opens inward, chasms yawn,
Vast images in glimmering dawn,
Half shown, are broken and withdrawn.

'Ah! sure within him and without,
Could his dark wisdom find it out,
There must be answer to his doubt,

'But thou canst answer not again.
With thine own weapon art thou slain,
Or thou wilt answer but in vain.

'The doubt would rest, I dare not solve,
In the same circle we revolve.
Assurance only breeds resolve.'

As when a billow blown against,
Falls back, the voice with which I fenced
A little ceased, but recommenced:

'Where wert thou when thy father play'd
In his free field, and pastime made,
A merry boy in sun and shade?

'A merry boy they call'd him then,
He sat upon the knees of men
In days that never come again.

'Before the little ducts began
To feed thy bones with lime, and ran
Their course, till thou wert also man;

'Who took a wife, who rear'd his race,
Whose wrinkles gather'd on his face,
Whose troubles number with his days;

'A life of nothings, nothing-worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth!'

'These words,' I said, 'are like the rest;
No certain clearness, but at best
A vague suspicion of the breast:

'But if I grant thou mightst defend
The thesis which thy words intend—
That to begin implies to end;

'Yet how should I for certain hold,
Because my memory is so cold,
That I first was in human mould?

'I cannot make this matter plain,
But I would shoot, howe'er in vain,
A random arrow from the brain.

'It may be that no life is found,
Which only to one engine bound
Falls off, but cycles always round.

'As old mythologies relate,
Some draught of Lethe might await
The slipping through from state to state;

'As here we find in trances, men
Forget the dream that happens then,
Until they fall in trance again;

'So might we, if our state were such
As one before, remember much,
For those two likes might meet and touch.

'But, if I lapsed from nobler place,
Some legend of a fallen race
Alone might hint of my disgrace;

'Some vague emotion of delight
In gazing up an Alpine height,
Some yearning toward the lamps of night;

'Or if thro' lower lives I came—
Tho' all experience past became
Consolidate in mind and frame—

'I might forget my weaker lot;
For is not our first year forgot?
The haunts of memory echo not.

'And men, whose reason long was blind,
From cells of madness unconfined,
Oft lose whole years of darker mind.

'Much more, if first I floated free,
As naked essence, must I be
Incompetent of memory;

'For memory dealing but with time,
And he with matter, could she climb
Beyond her own material prime?

'Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—

'Of something felt, like something here;
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare.'

The still voice laugh'd. 'I talk,' said he,
'Not with thy dreams. Suffice it thee
Thy pain is a reality.'

'But thou,' said I, 'has missed thy mark,
Who sought'st to wreck my mortal ark,
By making all the horizon dark.

'Why not set forth, if I should do
This rashness, that which might ensue
With this old soul in organs new?

'Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Has ever truly long'd for death.

' 'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,
O life, not death, for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that I want.'

I ceased and sat as one forlorn.
Then said the voice in quiet scorn,
'Behold, it is the Sabbath morn.'

And I arose, and I released
The casement, and the light increased
With freshness in the dawning east.

Like soften'd airs that blowing steal,
When meres begin to uncongeal,
The sweet church bells began to peal.

On to God's house the people prest;
Passing the place where each must rest,
Each enter'd like a welcome guest.

One walk'd between his wife and child,
With measured footfall firm and mild,
And now and then he gravely smiled.

The prudent partner of his blood
Lean'd on him, faithful, gentle, good,
Wearing the rose of womanhood.

And in their double love secure,
The little maiden walk'd demure,
Pacing with downward eyelids pure.

These three made unity so sweet,
My frozen heart began to beat,
Remembering its ancient heat.

I blest them, and they wander'd on;
I spoke, but answer came there none;
The dull and bitter voice was gone.

A second voice was at mine ear,
A little whisper silver-clear,
A murmur, 'Be of better cheer.'

As from some blissful neighbourhood,
A notice faintly understood,
'I see the end, and know the good.'

A little hint to solace woe,
A hint, a whisper breathing low,
'I may not speak of what I know.'

Like an Æolian harp that wakes
No certain air, but overtakes
Far thought with music that it makes;

Such seem'd the whisper at my side:
'What is it thou knowest, sweet voice?' I cried.
'A hidden hope,' the voice replied;

So heavenly-toned, that in that hour
From out my sullen heart a power
Broke, like the rainbow from the shower,

To feel, altho' no tongue can prove,
That every cloud, that spreads above
And veileth love, itself is love.

And forth into the fields I went,
And Nature's living motion lent
The pulse of hope to discontent.

I wonder'd at the bounteous hours,
The slow result of winter showers;
You scarce could see the grass for flowers.

I wonder'd, while I paced along;
The woods were fill'd so full with song,
There seem'd no room for sense of wrong;

And all so variously wrought,
I marvell'd how the mind was brought
To anchor by one gloomy thought;

And wherefore rather I made choice
To commune with that barren voice,
Than him that said, 'Rejoice! Rejoice!'

1833

THE REVENGE

A Ballad of the Fleet

AT FLORES in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came flying from far away:
'Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three!'
Then sware Lord Thomas Howard: 'Fore God I am no coward;
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow quick.
We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-three?'

II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: 'I know you are no coward;
You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left them my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain.'

III

So Lord Howard passed away with five ships of war that day,
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the land
Very carefully and slow,
Men of Bideford in Devon,
And we laid them on the ballast down below;
For we brought them all aboard,
And they blest him in their pain, that they were not left to Spain,
To the thumb-screw and the stake, for the glory of the Lord.

IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to fight,
And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather bow.
'Shall we fight or shall we fly?'

'Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die!
There'll be little of us left by the time the sun be set.'
And Sir Richard said again: 'We be all good English men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the devil,
For I never turn'd my back upon Don or devil yet.'

V

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and we roar'd a hurrah, and so
The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart of the foe,
With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety sick below;
For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left were seen,
And the little Revenge ran on thro' the long sea-lane between.

VI

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from their decks and
laugh'd,
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad little craft
Running on and on, till delay'd
By their mountain-like San Philip that, of fifteen hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

VII

And while now the great San Philip hung above us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day,
And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard lay,
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought herself and went,
Having that within her womb that had left her ill content;
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought us hand to hand,
For a dozen times they came, with their pikes and musqueteers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

IX

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over the
summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and the fifty-
three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons
came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-thunder and
flame;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead
and her shame.
For some were sunk and many were shatter'd, and so could fight
us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before?

X

For he said, 'Fight on! fight on!'
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck;
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer night was
gone,
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly dead,
And himself he was wounded again in the side and the head,
And he said, 'Fight on! fight on!'

XI

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far over the
summer sea,
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay around us all in a ring;
But they dared not touch us again, for they fear'd that we still
could sting,
So they watch'd what the end would be.
And we had not fought them in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate strife;
And the sick men down in the hold were most of them stark and
cold,
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder was all
of it spent;

And the masts and the rigging were lying over the side;
 But Sir Richard cried in his English pride:
 'We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
 As may never be fought again!
 We have won great glory, my men!
 And a day less or more
 At sea or ashore,
 We die—does it matter when?
 Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in twain!
 Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!'

XII

And the gunner said, 'Ay, ay,' but the seamen made reply:
 'We have children, we have wives,
 And the Lord hath spared our lives.
 We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to let us go;
 We shall live to fight again and to strike another blow.'
 And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the foe.

XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him then,
 Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard caught at last,
 And they praised him to his face with their courtly foreign grace;
 But he rose upon their decks, and he cried:
 'I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant man and true;
 I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do.
 With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die!'
 And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant and true,
 And had holden the power and glory of Spain so cheap
 That he dared her with one little ship and his English few;
 Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they knew,
 But they sank his body with honour down into the deep,
 And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier alien crew,
 And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for her own;
 When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke from sleep,
 And the water began to heave and the weather to moan,

And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earthquake grew,
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their masts and
their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shatter'd navy of
Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by the island crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

1878

From WILL

BUT ILL FOR HIM who, bettering not with time,
Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended Will,
And ever weaker grows thro' acted crime,
Or seeming-genial venial fault,
Recurring and suggesting still!
He seems as one whose footsteps halt,
Toiling in immeasurable sand,
And o'er a weary sultry land,
Far beneath a blazing vault,
Sown in a wrinkle of the monstrous hill,
The city sparkles like a grain of salt.

1855

COME DOWN, O MAID

'COME DOWN, O maid, from yonder mountain height.
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang),
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?
But cease to move so near the heavens and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,

'Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
 With Death and Morning on the Silver Horns,
 Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
 Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
 That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
 To roll the torrent out of dusky doors.
 But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
 To find him in the valley; let the wild
 Lean-headed eagles yelp alone, and leave
 The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
 Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
 That like a broken purpose waste in air.
 So waste not thou, but come; for all the vales
 Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
 Arise to thee; the children call, and I
 Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is very sound,
 Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
 Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
 The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
 And murmuring of innumerable bees.'

1847

LOCKSLEY HALL

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn;
 Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle-
 horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews call,
 Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracts,
 And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
 Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the west.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade,
 Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Here about the beach I wander'd, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed;
When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed;

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the world and all the wonder that would be.—

In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;
In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnish'd dove;
In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of
love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so
young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, 'My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee.'

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turn'd—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, 'I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me
wrong;'
Saying, 'Dost thou love me, cousin?' weeping, 'I have loved thee
long.'

Love took up the lass of Time, and turn'd it in his glowing
hands;
Every oment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with
might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of
sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper throng'd my pulses with the fullness of the
spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rush'd together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be; thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is; thou art mated with a clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee
down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel
force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy; think not they are glazed with
wine.
Go to him: it is thy duty; kiss him, take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought;
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter
thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my hand!

.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore?
No—she never loved me truly; love is love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorn'd of devils! this is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to
proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and
fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widow'd marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt
weep.

Thou shalt hear the 'Never, never,' whisper'd by the phantom
years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow; get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine; a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down; my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his; it will be worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.

'They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not
exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffer'd'—Perish in thy self-contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like
these?

Every door is barr'd with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is throng'd with suitors, all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy; what is that which I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,
When the ranks are roll'd in vapour, and the winds are laid with
sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honour feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would
yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new;
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they
shall do:

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly
dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing
warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-
storm;

Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were
furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

.

Mother-Age, (for mine I knew not) help me as when life begun;
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the
sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall!
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapour from the margin, blackening over heath andholt,
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

1842

FLOWER IN THE CRANNIED WALL

FLOWER in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

1870

THE EAGLE

Fragment

HE CLASPS the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

1851

DESPAIR

'A man and his wife having lost faith in a God, and hope of a life to come, and being utterly miserable in this, resolve to end themselves by drowning. The woman is drowned, but the man rescued by a minister of the sect he had abandoned.'

Is it you, that preach'd in the chapel there looking over the
sand?
Follow'd us too that night, and dogg'd us, and drew me to land?

II

What did I feel that night? You are curious. How should I tell?
Does it matter so much what I felt? You rescued me—yet—was
it well

That you came unwish'd for, uncall'd, between me and the deep
and my doom,

Three days since, three more dark days of the Godless gloom
Of a life without sun, without health, without hope, without any
delight

In anything here upon earth? but, ah, God! that night, that night
When the rolling eyes of the lighthouse there on the fatal neck
Of land running out into rock—they had saved many hundreds
from wreck—

Glared on our way toward death, I remember I thought, as we
past,
Does it matter how many they saved? we are all of us wrecked
at last—
'Do you fear?' and there came thro' the roar of the breaker a
whisper, a breath,
'Fear? am I not with you? I am frightened at life, not death.'

III

And the suns of the limitless universe sparkled and shone in the
sky,
Flashing with fires as of God, but we knew that their light was
a lie—
Bright as with deathless hope—but, however they sparkled and
shone,
The dark little worlds running round them were worlds of woe
like our own—
No soul in the heaven above, no soul on the earth below,
A fiery scroll written over with lamentation and woe.

IV

See, we were nursed in the drear night-fold of your fatalist creed,
And we turn'd to the growing dawn, we had hoped for a dawn
indeed,
When the light of a sun that was coming would scatter the ghosts
of the past,
And the cramping creeds that had madden'd the peoples would
vanish at last,
And we broke away from the Christ, our human brother and
friend,
For He spoke, or it seem'd that He spoke, of a hell without help,
without end.

V

Hoped for a dawn, and it came, but the promise had faded away;
We had passed from a cheerless night to the glare of a drearier day;
He is only a cloud and a smoke who was once a pillar of fire,
The guess of a worm in the dust and the shadow of its desire—
Of a worm as it writhes in a world of the weak trodden down by
the strong,
Of a dying worm in a world, all massacre, murder, and wrong.

VI

O we poor orphans of nothing—alone on that lonely shore—
 Born of the brainless Nature who knew not that which she bore!
 Trusting no longer that earthly flower would be heavenly fruit—
 Come from the brute, poor souls—no souls—and to die with the
 brute—

VII

Nay, but I am not claiming your pity; I know you of old—
 Small pity for those that have ranged from the narrow warmth
 of your fold,
 Where you bawl'd the dark side of your faith and a God of
 eternal rage,
 Till you flung us back on ourselves, and the human heart, and
 the Age.

VIII

But pity—the Pagan held it a vice—was in her and in me,
 Helpless, taking the place of the pitying God that should be!
 Pity for all that aches in the grasp of an idiot power,
 And pity for our own selves on an earth that bore not a flower;
 Pity for all that suffers on land or in air or the deep,
 And pity for our own selves till we long'd for eternal sleep.

IX

'Lightly step over the sands! the waters—you hear them call!
 Life with its anguish, and horrors, and errors—away with it all!
 And she laid her hand in my own—she was always loyal and
 sweet—
 Till the points of the foam in the dusk came playing about our
 feet.
There was a strong sea-current would sweep us out to the main.
 'Ah God!' tho' I felt as I spoke I was taking the name in vain—
 'Ah God!' and we turn'd to each other, we kiss'd, we embraced,
 she and I,
 Knowing the love we were used to believe everlasting would die.
 We had read their know-nothing books, and we lean'd to the
 darker side—
 Ah God, should we find Him, perhaps, perhaps, if we died, if
 we died;

We never had found Him on earth, this earth is a fatherless
hell—

'Dear love, for ever and ever, for ever and ever farewell!'

Never a cry so desolate, not since the world began,

Never a kiss so sad, no, not since the coming of man!

X

But the blind wave cast me ashore, and you saved me, a valueless
life.

Not a grain of gratitude mine! You have parted the man from
the wife.

I am left alone on the land, she is all alone in the sea;

If a curse meant aught, I would curse you for not having let
me be.

XI

Visions of youth—for my brain was drunk with the water, it
seems;

I had past into perfect quiet at length out of pleasant dreams.

And the transient trouble of drowning—what was it when
match'd with the pains

Of the hellish heat of a wretched life rushing back thro' the
veins?

XII

Why should I live? one son had forged on his father and fled,
And if I believed in a God, I would thank Him, the other is dead,
And there was a baby girl, that had never look'd on the light;
Happiest she of us all, for she past from the night to the night.

XIII

But the crime, if a crime, of her eldest-born, her glory, her boast,
Struck hard at the tender heart of the mother, and broke it
almost;

Tho' glory and shame dying out for ever in endless time,

Does it matter so much whether crown'd for a virtue, or hang'd
for a crime?

XIV

And ruin'd by *him*, by *him*, I stood there, naked, amazed

In a world of arrogant opulence, fear'd myself turning crazed,

And I would not be mock'd in a madhouse! and she, the delicate wife,
With a grief that could only be cured, if cured, by the surgeon's knife,—

XV

Why should we bear with an hour of torture, a moment of pain,
If every man die for ever, if all his griefs are in vain,
And the homeless planet at length will be wheel'd thro' the
 silence of space,
Motherless evermore of an ever-vanishing race,
When the worm shall have writhed its last, and its last brother-
 worm will have fled
From the dead fossil skull that is left in the rocks of an earth that
 is dead?

XVI

Have I crazed myself over their horrible infidel writings? O yes,
For these are the new dark ages, you see, of the popular press,
When the bat comes out of his cave, and the owls are whooping
 at noon,
And Doubt is lord of this dunghill and crows to the sun and
 the moon,
Till the Sun and the Moon of our science are both of them turn'd
 into blood,
And Hope will have broken her heart, running after a shadow of
 good;
For their knowing and know-nothing books are scatter'd from
 hand to hand—
We have knelt in your know-all chapel too, looking over the
 sand.

XVII

What! I should call on that Infinite Love that has served us so
 well?
Infinite cruelty rather that made everlasting Hell,
Made us, foreknew us, foredoom'd us, and does what he will with
 his own;
Better our dead brute mother who never has heard us groan!

XVIII

Hell? if the souls of men were immortal, as men have been told,
The lecher would cleave to his lusts, and the miser would yearn
for his gold,
And so there were Hell for ever! but were there a God, as you say,
His love would have power over Hell till it utterly vanish'd away.

XIX

Ah yet—I have had some glimmer, at times, in my gloomiest
woe,
Of a God behind all—after all—the great God, for aught that
I know;
But the God of love and of hell together—they cannot be
thought,
If there be such a God, may the Great God curse him and bring
him to nought!

XX

Blasphemy! whose is the fault? is it mine? for why would you
save
A madman to vex you with wretched words, who is best in his
grave?
Blasphemy! ay, why not, being damn'd beyond hope of grace?
O would I were yonder with her, and away from your faith
and your face!
Blasphemy! true! I have scared you pale with my scandalous talk,
But the blasphemy to *my* mind lies all in the way that you walk.

XXI

Hence! she is gone! can I stay? can I breathe divorced from the
Past?
You needs must have good lynx-eyes if I do not escape you at
last.
Our orthodox coroner doubtless will find it a *felo-de-se*,
And the stake and the cross-road, fool, if you will, does it matter
to me?

1881

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

(*Founded on an Irish Legend, A.D. 700*).

I WAS the chief of the race—he had stricken my father dead—
But I gather'd my fellows together, I swore I would strike off
his head.

Each of them look'd like a king, and was noble in birth as in
worth,

And each of them boasted he sprang from the oldest race upon
earth.

Each was as brave in the fight as the bravest hero of song,
And each of them liefer had died than have done one another
a wrong.

He lived on an isle in the ocean—we sail'd on a Friday morn—
He that had slain my father the day before I was born.

II

And we came to the isle in the ocean, and there on the shore
was he.

But a sudden blast blew us out and away thro' a boundless sea.

III

And we came to the Silent Isle that we never had touch'd at
before,

Where a silent ocean always broke on a silent shore,
And the brooks glitter'd on in the light without sound, and the
long waterfalls

Pour'd in a thunderless plunge to the base of the mountain walls,
And the poplar and cypress unshaken by storm flourish'd up be-
yond sight,

And the pine shot aloft from the crag to an unbelievable height,
And high in the heaven above it there flicker'd a songless lark,
And the cock couldn't crow, and the bull couldn't low, and the
dog couldn't bark.

And round it we went, and thro' it, but never a murmur, a
breath—

It was all of it fair as life, it was all of it quiet as death,
And we hated the beautiful Isle, for whenever we strove to speak
Our voices were thinner and fainter than any flittermouse-shriek;
And the men that were mighty of tongue and could raise such
a battle-cry
That a hundred who heard it would rush on a thousand lances
and die—
O they to be dumb'd by the charm!—so fluster'd with anger
were they
They almost fell on each other; but after we sail'd away.

IV

And we came to the Isle of Shouting; we landed, a score of wild
birds
Cried from the topmost summit with human voices and words.
Once in an hour they cried, and whenever their voices peal'd
The steer fell down at the plow and the harvest died from the
field,
And the men dropt dead in the valleys and half of the cattle
went lame,
And the roof sank in on the hearth, and the dwelling broke into
flame;
And the shouting of these wild birds ran into the hearts of my
crew,
Till they shouted along with the shouting and seized one another
and slew.
But I drew them the one from the other; I saw that we could
not stay,
And we left the dead to the birds, and we sail'd with our wounded
away.

V

And we came to the Isle of Flowers; their breath met us out on
the seas,
For the Spring and the middle Summer sat each on the lap of
the breeze;
And the red passion-flower to the cliffs, and the dark blue clem-
atis, clung,
And starr'd with a myriad blossom the long convolvulus hung;
And the topmost spire of the mountain was lilies in lieu of snow,
And the lilies like glaciers winded down, running out below

Thro' the fire of the tulip and poppy, the blaze of gorse, and the
 blush
 Of millions of roses that sprang without leaf or a thorn from the
 bush;
 And the whole isle-side flashing down from the peak without ever
 a tree
 Swept like a torrent of gems from the sky to the blue of the sea.
 And we roll'd upon capes of crocus and vaunted our kith and
 our kin,
 And we wallow'd in beds of lilies, and chanted the triumph of
 Finn,
 Till each like a golden image was pollen'd from head to feet
 And each was as dry as a cricket, with thirst in the middle-day
 heat.
 Blossom and blossom, and promise of blossom, but never a fruit!
 And we hated the Flowering Isle, as we hated the isle that was
 mute,
 And we tore up the flowers by the million and flung them in
 bight and bay,
 And we left but a naked rock, and in anger we sail'd away.

VI

And we came to the Isle of Fruits; all round from the cliffs and
 the capes,
 Purple or amber, dangled a hundred fathom of grapes,
 And the warm melon lay like a little sun on the tawny sand,
 And the fig ran up from the beach and rioted over the land,
 And the mountain arose like a jewell'd throne thro' the fragrant
 air,
 Glowing with all colour'd plums and with golden masses of pear,
 And the crimson and scarlet of berries that flamed upon bine
 and vine,
 But in every berry and fruit was the poisonous pleasure of wine;
 And the peak of the mountain was apples, the hughest that ever
 were seen,
 And they prest, as they grew, on each other, with hardly a leaflet
 between,
 And all of them redder than rosiest health or than utterest
 shame,
 And setting, when Even descended, the very sunset aflame.
 And we stay'd three days, and we gorged and we madden'd, till
 every one drew

His sword on his fellow to slay him, and ever they struck and
they slew;
And myself, I had eaten but sparsely, and fought till I sunder'd
the fray,
Then I bad them remember my father's death, and we sail'd
away.

VII

And we came to the Isle of Fire; we were lured by the light
from afar,
For the peak sent up one league of fire to the Northern Star;
Lured by the glare and the blare, but scarcely could stand
upright,
For the whole isle shudder'd and shook like a man in a mortal
affright.
We were giddy besides with the fruits we had gorged, and so
crazed that at last
There were some leap'd into the fire; and away we sailed, and
we past
Over that undersea isle, where the water is clearer than air.
Down we look'd—what a garden! O bliss, what a Paradise there!
Towers of a happier time, low down in a rainbow deep
Silent palaces, quiet fields of eternal sleep!
And three of the gentles and best of my people, whate'er I could
say,
Plunged head down in the sea, and the Paradise trembled away.

VIII

And we came to the Bounteous Isle, where the heavens lean low
on the land,
And ever at dawn from the cloud glitter'd o'er us a sun-bright
hand,
Then it open'd and dropt at the side of each man, as he rose
from his rest,
Bread enough for his need till the labourless day dipt under the
west;
And we wander'd about it and thro' it. O never was time so
good!
And we sang of the triumphs of Finn, and the boast of our
ancient blood,
And we gazed at the wandering wave as we sat by the gurgle of
springs,

And we chanted the songs of the Bards and the glories of fairy
kings.
But at length we began to be weary, to sigh, and to stretch and
yawn,
Till we hated the Bounteous Isle and the sun-bright hand of the
dawn,
For there was not an enemy near, but the whole green Isle was
our own,
And we took to playing at ball, and we took to throwing the
stone,
And we took to playing at battle, but that was a perilous play,
For the passion of battle was in us, we slew and we sail'd away.

IX

And we came to the Isle of Witches and heard their musical
cry—
'Come to us, O come, come!' in the stormy red of a sky
Dashing the fires and the shadows of dawn on the beautiful
shapes,
For a wild witch naked as heaven stood on each of the loftiest
capes,
And a hundred ranged on the rock like white sea-birds in a row
And a hundred gamboll'd and pranced on the wrecks in the
sand below,
And a hundred splash'd from the ledges, and bosom'd the burst
of the spray;
But I knew we should fall on each other, and hastily sail'd away.

X

And we came in an evil time to the Isle of the Double Towers,
One was of smooth-cut stone, one carved all over with flowers,
But an earthquake always moved in the hollows under the dells,
And they shock'd on each other and butted each other with
clashing of bells,
And the daws flew out of the towers and jangled and wrangled
in vain,
And the clash and boom of the bells rang into the heart and the
brain,
Till the passion of battle was on us, and all took sides with the
Towers,

There were some for the clean-cut stone, there were more for the
carven flowers,
And the wrathful thunder of God peal'd over us all the day,
For the one half slew the other, and after we sail'd away.

XI

And we came to the Isle of a Saint who had sail'd with Saint
Brendan of yore,
He had lived ever since on the Isle and his winters were fifteen
score,
And his voice was low as from other worlds, and his eyes were
sweet,
And his white hair sank to his heels, and his white beard fell
to his feet,
And he spake to me: 'O Maeldune, let be this purpose of thine!
Remember the words of the Lord when he told us, "Vengeance
is mine!"
His fathers have slain thy fathers in war or in single strife,
Thy fathers have slain his fathers, each taken a life for a life,
Thy father had slain his father, how long shall the murder last?
Go back to the Isle of Finn and suffer the Past to be Past.'
And we kiss'd the fringe of his beard, and we pray'd as we heard
him pray,
And the Holy man he assoil'd us, and sadly we sail'd away.

XII

And we came to the Isle we were blown from, and there on the
shore was he,
The man that had slain my father. I saw him and let him be.
O weary was I of the travel, the trouble, the strife, and the sin,
When I landed again with a tithe of my men, on the Isle of Finn!

1881

AMPHION

MY FATHER left a park to me,
 But it is wild and barren,
 A garden too with scarce a tree,
 And waster than a warren;
 Yet say the neighbours when they call,
 It is not bad but good land,
 And in it is the germ of all
 That grows within the woodland.

O had I lived when song was great
 In days of old Amphion,
 And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,
 Nor cared for seed or scion!
 And had I lived when song was great,
 And legs of trees were limber,
 And ta'en my fiddle to the gate,
 And fiddled in the timber!

'Tis said he had a tuneful tongue,
 Such happy intonation,
 Wherever he sat down and sung
 He left a small plantation;
 Wherever in a lonely grove
 He set up his forlorn pipes,
 The gouty oak began to move,
 And flounder into hornpipes.

The mountain stirr'd its bushy crown,
 And, as tradition teaches,
 Young ashes pirouetted down
 Coquetting with young beeches;
 And briony-vine and ivy-wreath
 Ran forward to his rhyming,
 And from the valleys underneath
 Came little copses climbing.

The linden broke her ranks and rent
The woodbine wreaths that bind her,
And down the middle, buzz! she went
With all her bees behind her;
The poplars, in long order due,
With cypress promenaded,
The shock-head willows two and two
By rivers galloped.

Came wet-shod alder from the wave,
Came yews, a dismal coterie;
Each pluck'd his one foot from the grave,
Poussetting with a sloe-tree;
Old elms came breaking from the vine,
The vine stream'd out to follow,
And, sweating rosin, plump'd the pine
From many a cloudy hollow.

And wasn't it a sight to see,
When, ere his song was ended,
Like some great landslip, tree by tree,
The country-side descended;
And shepherds from the mountain-caves
Look'd down, half-pleased, half-frighten'd,
As dash'd about the drunken leaves
The random sunshine lighten'd!

O, Nature first was fresh to men,
And wanton without measure;
So youthful and so flexile then,
You moved her at your pleasure.
Twang out, my fiddle! shake the twigs!
And make her dance attendance;
Blow, flute, and stir the stiff set sprigs,
And scirrhous roots and tendons!

'Tis vain! in such a brassy age
I could not move a thistle;
The very sparrows in the hedge
Scarce answer to my whistle;

Or at the most when three-parts-sick
 With strumming and with scraping,
 A jackass heehaws from the rick,
 The passive oxen gaping.

But what is that I hear? a sound
 Like sleepy counsel pleading;
 O Lord!—'tis in my neighbours ground,
 The modern Muses reading.
 They read Botanic Treatises,
 And Works on Gardening thro' there,
 And Methods of Transplanting Trees
 To look as if they grew there.

The wither'd Misses! how they prose
 O'er books of travell'd seamen,
 And show you slips of all that grows
 From England to Van Diemen.
 They read in arbours clipt and cut,
 And alleys, faded places,
 By squares of tropic summer shut
 And warm'd in crystal cases.

But these, tho' fed with careful dirt,
 Are neither green nor sappy;
 Half-conscious of the garden-squirt,
 The spindlings look unhappy.
 Better to me the meanest weed
 That blows upon its mountain,
 The vilest herb that runs to seed
 Beside its native fountain.

And I must work thro' months of toil,
 And years of cultivation,
 Upon my proper patch of soil
 To grow my own plantation.
 I'll take the showers as they fall,
 I will not vex my bosom;
 Enough if at the end of all
 A little garden blossom.

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

PART I

ON EITHER SIDE the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken sailed
 Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
 The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to tower'd Camelot;

And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers ' 'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott.'

PART II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot;
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot;

Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rung merrily
As he rode down to Camelot;
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot;
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.

From the bank and from the river
 He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
 'Tirra lirra,' by the river
 Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
 She made three paces thro' the room,
 She saw the water-lily bloom,
 She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She look'd down to Camelot.
 Out flew the web and floated wide;
 The mirror crack'd from side to side;
 'The curse is come upon me,' cried
 The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
 The pale yellow woods were waning,
 The broad stream in his banks complaining,
 Heavily the low sky raining
 Over tower'd Camelot;
 Down she came and found a boat
 Beneath a willow left afloat,
 And round about the prow she wrote
 The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
 Like some bold seer in a trance,
 Seeing all his own mischance—
 With a glassy countenance
 Did she look to Camelot.
 And at the closing of the day
 She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
 The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
 That loosely flew to left and right—
 The leaves upon her falling light—
 Thro' the noises of the night
 She floated down to Camelot;

And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, 'She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.'

1833

WILL WATERPROOF'S LYRICAL MONOLOGUE

Made at the Cock

O PLUMP head-waiter at The Cock,
To which I most resort,
How goes the time? 'Tis five o'clock.
Go fetch a pint of port;
But let it not be such as that
You set before chance-comers,
But such whose father-grape grew fat
On Lusitanian summers.

No vain libation to the Muse,
But may she still be kind,
And whisper lovely words, and use
Her influence on the mind,
To make me write my random rhymes,
Ere they be half-forgotten;
Nor add and alter, many times,
Till all be ripe and rotten.

I pledge her, and she comes and dips
Her laurel in the wine,
And lays it thrice upon my lips,
These favour'd lips of mine;
Until the charm have power to make
New life-blood warm the bosom,
And barren commonplaces break
In full and kindly blossom.

I pledge her silent at the board;
Her gradual fingers steal
And touch upon the master-chord
Of all I felt and feel.
Old wishes, ghosts of broken plans,
And phantom hopes assemble;
And that child's heart within the man's
Begins to move and tremble.

Thro' many an hour of summer suns,
By many pleasant ways,
Against its fountain upward runs
The current of my days.
I kiss the lips I once have kiss'd;
The gas-light wavers dimmer;
And softly, thro' a vinous mist,
My college friendships glimmer.

I grow in worth, and wit, and sense,
Unboding critic pen,
Or that eternal want of pence
Which vexes public men,
Who hold their hands to all, and cry
For that which all deny them—
Who sweep the crossings, wet or dry,
And all the world go by them.

Ah! yet, tho' all the world forsake,
Tho' fortune clip my wings,
I will not cramp my heart, nor take
Half-views of men and things.
Let Whig and Tory stir their blood;
There must be stormy weather;
But for some true result of good
All parties work together.

Let there be thistles, there are grapes;
If old things, there are new;
Ten thousand broken lights and shapes,
Yet glimpses of the true.
Let raffs be rife in prose and rhyme,
We lack not rhymes and reasons,
As on this whirligig of Time
We circle with the seasons.

This earth is rich in man and maid,
With fair horizons bound;
This whole wide earth of light and shade
Comes out, a perfect round.
High over roaring Temple-bar,
And set in heaven's third story,
I look at all things as they are,
But thro' a kind of glory.

Head-waiter, honour'd by the guest
 Half-mused, or reeling ripe,
 The pint you brought me was the best
 That ever came from pipe.
 But tho' the port surpasses praise,
 My nerves have dealt with stiffer.
 Is there some magic in the place?
 Or do my peptics differ?

For since I came to live and learn,
 No pint of white or red
 Had ever half the power to turn
 This wheel within my head,
 Which bears a season'd brain about,
 Unsubject to confusion,
 Tho' soak'd and saturate, out and out,
 Thro' every convolution.

For I am of a numerous house,
 With many kinsmen gay,
 Where long and largely we carouse
 As who shall say me nay?
 Each month, a birthday coming on,
 We drink, defying trouble,
 Or sometimes two would meet in one,
 And then we drank it double;

Whether the vintage, yet unkept,
 Had relish fiery-new,
 Or elbow-deep in sawdust, slept,
 As old as Waterloo,
 Or stow'd, when classic Canning died,
 In musty bins and chambers,
 Had cast upon its crusty side
 The gloom of ten Decembers.

The Muse, the jolly Muse, it is!
 She answer'd to my call;
 She changes with that mood or this,
 Is all-in-all to all;
 She lit the spark within my throat,
 To make my blood run quicker,
 Used all her fiery will, and smote
 Her life into the liquor.

And hence this halo lives about
The waiter's hands that reach
To each his perfect pint of stout,
His proper chop to each.
He looks not like the common breed
That with the napkin dally;
I think he came, like Ganymede,
From some delightful valley.

The Cock was of a larger egg
That modern poultry drop,
Stept forward on a firmer leg,
And cramm'd a plumper crop,
Upon an ampler dunghill trod,
Crow'd lustier late and early,
Sipt wine from silver, praising God,
And raked in golden barley.

A private life was all his joy,
Till in a court he saw
A something-pottle-bodied boy
That knuckled at the taw.
He stoop'd and clutch'd him, fair and good,
Flew over roof and casement;
His brothers of the weather stood
Stock-still for sheer amazement.

But he, by farmstead, thorpe, and spire,
And follow'd with acclaims,
A sign to many a staring shire,
Came crowing over Thames.
Right down by smoky Paul's they bore,
Till, where the street grows straiter,
One fix'd for ever at the door,
And one became head-waiter.

But whither would my fancy go?
How out of place she makes
The violet of a legend blow
Among the chops and steaks!
'Tis but a steward of the can,
One shade more plump than common;
As just and mere a serving-man
As any born of woman.

I ranged too high: what draws me down
 Into the common day?
 Is it the weight of that half-crown
 Which I shall have to pay?
 For, something duller than at first,
 Nor wholly comfortable,
 I sit, my empty glass reversed,
 And thrumming on the table;

Half fearful that, with self at strife,
 I take myself to task,
 Lest of the fulness of my life
 I leave an empty flask;
 For I had hope, by something rare,
 To prove myself a poet,
 But, while I plan and plan, my hair
 Is gray before I know it.

So fares it since the years began,
 Till they be gather'd up;
 The truth, that flies the flowing can,
 Will haunt the vacant cup;
 And others' follies teach us not,
 Nor much their wisdom teaches;
 And most, of sterling worth, is what
 Our own experience preaches.

Ah, let the rusty theme alone!
 We know not what we know.
 But for my pleasant hour, 'tis gone;
 'Tis gone, and let it go.
 'Tis gone: a thousand such have slipt
 Away from my embraces,
 And fall'n into the dusty crypt
 Of darken'd forms and faces.

Go, therefore, thou! thy betters went
 Long since, and came no more;
 With peals of genial clamour sent
 From many a tavern door,
 With twisted quirks and happy hits,
 From misty men of letters;
 The tavern-hours of mighty wits,—
 Thine elders and thy betters.

Hours when the Poet's words and looks
Had yet their native glow,
Nor yet the fear of little books
Had made him talk for show;
But, all his vast heart sherris-warm'd,
He flash'd his random speeches,
Ere days, that deal in ana, swarm'd
His literary leeches.

So mix for ever with the past,
Like all good things on earth!
For should I prize thee, couldst thou last,
At half thy real worth?
I hold it good, good things should pass:
With time I will not quarrel:
It is but yonder empty glass
That makes me maudlin-moral.

Head-waiter of the chop-house here,
To which I most resort,
I too must part: I hold thee dear
For this good pint of port.
For this, thou shalt from all things suck
Marrow of mirth and laughter;
And wheresoe'er thou move, good luck
Shall fling her old shoe after.

But thou wilt never move from hence,
The sphere thy fate allots:
Thy latter days increased with pence
Go down among the pots:
Thou battenest by the greasy gleam
In haunts of hungry sinners,
Old boxes, larded with the steam
Of thirty thousand dinners.

We fret, *we* fume, would shift our skins,
Would quarrel with our lot;
Thy care is, under polish'd tins,
To serve the hot-and-hot;
To come and go, and come again,
Returning like the pewit,
And watch'd by silent gentlemen,
That trifle with the cruet.

Live long, ere from thy topmost head
 The thick-set hazel dies;
 Long, ere the hateful crow shall tread
 The corners of thine eyes;
 Live long, nor feel in head or chest
 Our changeful equinoxes,
 Till mellow Death, like some late guest,
 Shall call thee from the boxes.

But when he calls, and thou shalt cease
 To pace the gritted floor,
 And, laying down an unctuous lease
 Of life, shalt earn no more;
 No carved cross-bones, the types of Death,
 Shall show thee past to Heaven,
 But carved cross-pipes, and, underneath,
 A pint-pot, neatly graven.

1842

THE PROGRESS OF SPRING

THE ground-flame of the crocus breaks the mould,
 Fair Spring slides hither o'er the Southern sea,
 Wavers on her thin stem the snow-drop cold
 That trembles not to kisses of the bee.
 Come, Spring, for now from all the dripping eaves
 The spear of ice has wept itself away,
 And hour by hour unfolding woodbine leaves
 O'er his uncertain shadow droops the day.
 She comes! The loosen'd rivulets run;
 The frost-bead melts upon her golden hair;
 Her mantle, slowly greening in the Sun,
 Now wraps her close, now arching leaves her bare
 To breaths of balmier air;

II

Up leaps the lark, gone wild to welcome her,
 About her dance the tits, and shriek the jays,
 Before her skims the jubilant woodpecker,
 The linnet's bosom blushes at her gaze,

While round her brows a woodland culver flits,
Watching her large light eyes and gracious looks,
And in her open palm a halcyon sits
Patient—the secret splendour of the brooks.
Come, Spring! She comes on waste and wood,
On farm and field; but enter also here,
Diffuse thyself at will thro' all my blood,
And, tho' thy violet sicken into sere,
Lodge with me all the year!

III

Once more a downy drift against the brakes,
Self-darken'd in the sky, descending slow!
But gladly see I thro' the wavering flakes
Yon blanching apricot like snow in snow.
These will thine eyes not brook in forest-paths,
On their perpetual pine, nor round the beech;
They fuse themselves to little spicy baths,
Solved in the tender blushes of the peach;
They lose themselves and die
On that new life that gems the hawthorn line;
Thy gay lent-lilies wave and put them by,
And out once more in varnish'd glory shine
Thy stars of celandine.

IV

She floats across the hamlet. Heaven lours,
But in the tearful splendour of her smiles
I see the slowly-thickening chestnut towers
Fill out the spaces by the barren tiles.
Now past her feet the swallow circling flies,
A clamorous cuckoo stoops to meet her hand;
Her light makes rainbows in my closing eyes,
I hear a charm of song thro' all the land.
Come, Spring! She comes, and Earth is glad
To roll her North below thy deepening dome,
But ere thy maiden birk be wholly clad,
And these low bushes dip their twigs in foam,
Make all true hearths thy home.

V

Across my garden! and the thicket stirs,
 The fountain pulses high in sunnier jets,
 The blackcap warbles, and the turtle purrs,
 The starling claps his tiny castanets.
 Still round her forehead wheels the woodland dove,
 And scatters on her throat the sparks of dew,
 The kingcup fills her footprint, and above
 Broaden the glowing isles of vernal blue.
 Hail, ample presence of a Queen,
 Bountiful, beautiful, apparell'd gay,
 Whose mantle, every shade of glancing green,
 Flies back in fragrant breezes to display
 A tunic white as May!

VI

She whispers, 'From the South I bring you balm,
 For on a tropic mountain was I born,
 While some dark dweller by the coco-palm
 Watch'd my far meadow zoned with airy morn;
 From under rose a muffled moan of floods;
 I sat beneath a solitude of snow;
 There no one came, the turf was fresh, the woods
 Plunged gulf on gulf thro' all their vales below.
 I saw beyond their silent tops
 The streaming marshes of the scarlet cranes,
 The slant trees leaning on the mangrove copse,
 And summer basking in the sultry plains
 About a land of cranes.

VII

'Then from my vapour-girdle soaring forth
 I scaled the buoyant highway of the birds,
 And drank the dews and drizzle of the North,
 That I might mix with men, and hear their words
 On pathway'd plains; for—while my hand exults
 Within the bloodless heart of lowly flowers
 To work old laws of Love to fresh results,
 Thro' manifold effect of simple powers—
 I too would teach the man

'Beyond the darker hour to see the bright,
That his fresh life may close as it began,
The still-fulfilling promise of a light
Narrowing the bounds of night.'

VIII

So wed thee with my soul, that I may mark
The coming year's great good and varied ills,
And new developments, whatever spark
Be struck from out the clash of warring wills;
Or whether, since our nature cannot rest,
The smoke of war's volcano burst again
From hoary deeps that belt the changeful West,
Old Empires, dwellings of the kings of men;
Or should those fail that hold the helm,
While the long day of knowledge grows and warms,
And in the heart of this most ancient realm
A hateful voice be utter'd and alarms
Sounding 'To arms! to arms!'

IX

A simpler, saner lesson might he learn
Who reads thy gradual process, Holy Spring.
Thy leaves possess the season in their turn,
And in their time thy warblers rise on wing.
How surely glidest thou from March to May,
And changest, breathing it, the sullen wind,
Thy scope of operation, day by day,
Larger and fuller, like the human mind!
Thy warmths from bud to bud
Accomplish that blind model in the seed,
And men have hopes, which race the restless blood,
That after many changes may succeed
Life which is Life indeed.

1889 (but written c. 1838)

THE DYING SWAN

THE plain was grassy wild and bare,
 Wide, wild, and open to the air,
 Which had built up everywhere
 An under-roof of doleful gray.
 With an inner voice the river ran,
 Adown it floated a dying swan,
 And loudly did lament.
 It was the middle of the day.
 Ever the weary wind went on,
 And took the reed-tops as it went.

II

Some blue peaks in the distance rose,
 And white against the cold-white sky,
 Shone out their crowning snows.
 One willow over the river wept,
 And shook the wave as the wind did sigh;
 Above in the wind was the swallow,
 Chasing itself at its own wild will,
 And far thro' the marish green and still
 The tangled water-courses slept,
 Shot over with purple, and green, and yellow.

III

The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul
 Of that waste place with joy
 Hidden in sorrow: at first to the ear
 The warble was low, and full and clear;
 And floating about the under-sky,
 Prevailing in weakness, the coronach stole
 Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear;
 But anon her awful jubilant voice,
 With a music strange and manifold,
 Flow'd forth on a carol free and bold;
 As when a mighty people rejoice

With shawns, and with cymbals, and harps of gold,
And the tumult of their acclaim is roll'd
Thro' the open gates of the city afar,
To the shepherd who watcheth the evening star.
And the creeping mosses and the clambering weeds,
And the willow-branches hoar and dank,
And the wavy swell of the sougling reeds,
And the wave-worn horns of the echoing bank,
And the silvery marish-flowers that throng
The desolate creeks and pools among,
Were flooded over with eddying song.

1830

THE HIGHER PANTHEISM

THE SUN, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is it not the Vision He, tho' He be not that which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why,
For is He not all but that which has power to feel 'I am I'?

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making Him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour and gloom.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can
meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some; no God at all, says the fool,
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?

1869

RIZPAH

I7—

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and sea—
And Willy's voice in the wind, 'O mother, come out to me!'
Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that I cannot
go?
For the downs are as bright as day, and the full moon stares at
the snow.

II

We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out of the town.
The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing over the
down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the creak of the
chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself drenched with
the rain.

III

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there left to fall?
I have taken them home, I have number'd the bones, I have
hidden them all.
What am I saying? and what are *you*? do you come as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls so must it lie.

IV

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—what have you
heard?
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken a word.
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none of their spies—
But the night has crept into my heart, and begun to darken my
eyes.

V

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should *you* know of the
night,
The blast and the burning shame and the bitter frost and the
fright?
I have done it, while you were asleep—you were only made for
the day.
I have gather'd my baby together—and now you may go your
way.

VI

Nay—for it's kind of you, madam, to sit by an old dying wife.
But say nothing hard of my boy, I have only an hour of life.
I kiss'd my boy in the prison, before he went out to die.
'They dared me to do it,' he said, and he never has told me a lie.
I whipt him for robbing an orchard once when he was but a
child—
'The farmer dared me to do it,' he said; he was always so wild—
And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he never could rest.
The King should have made him a soldier, he would have been
one of his best.

VII

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they never would let
him be good;
They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and he swore that he
would;
And he took no life, but he took one purse, and when all was
done
He flung it among his fellows—'I'll none of it,' said my son.

VIII

I came into the court to the judge and the lawyers. I told them my
tale,
God's own truth—but they kill'd him, they kill'd him for robbing
the mail.
They hang'd him in chains for a show—we had always borne a
good name—
To be hang'd for a thief—and then put away—isn't that enough
shame?

Dust to dust—low down—let us hide! but they set him so high
 That all the ships of the world could stare at him, passing by.
 God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and horrible fowls of the air,
 But not the black heart of the lawyer who kill'd him and hang'd
 him there.

IX

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my last good-bye;
 They had fasten'd the door of his cell: 'O mother!' I heard
 him cry.
 I couldn't get back tho' I tried, he had something further to say,
 And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced me away.

X

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy that was dead,
 They seized me and shut me up: they fasten'd me down on my
 bed.
 'Mother, O mother!'—he call'd in the dark to me year after
 year—
 They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that I couldn't
 but hear;
 And then at last they found I had grown so stupid and still
 They let me abroad again—but the creatures had worked their
 will.

XI

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was left—
 I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you call it a
 theft?—
 My baby, the bones that had suck'd me, the bones that had
 laughed and had cried—
 Theirs? O no! they are mine—not theirs—they had moved in
 my side.

XII

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kiss'd 'em, I buried
 'em all—
 I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the churchyard wall.
 My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet of judgment 'ill
 sound,
 But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy ground.

XIII

They would scratch him up—they would hang him again on the
cursed tree.

Sin, O yes, we are sinners, I know—let all that be,
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's good will toward men—
'Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord'—let me hear it again;
'Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering.' Yes, O yes!
For the lawyer is born but to murder—the Saviour lives but to
bless.

He'll never put on the black cap except for the worst of the
worst,

And the first may be last—I have heard it in church—and the
last may be first.

Suffering—O long-suffering—yes, as the Lord must know,
Year after year in the mist and the wind and the shower and
the snow.

XIV

Heard, have you? what? they have told you he never repented
his sin.

How do they know it? are *they* his mother? are *you* of his kin?

Heard! have you ever heard, when the storm on the downs
began,

The wind that 'ill wail like a child and the sea that 'ill moan
like a man?

XV

Election, Election, and Reprobation—it's all very well.

But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in Hell.

For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has look'd into my
care,

And He means me I'm sure to be happy with Willy, I know not
where.

XVI

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all your desire:

Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy be gone to the
fire?

I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may leave me
alone—

You never have borne a child—you are just as hard as a stone.

XVII

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that you mean to be kind,
But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice in the
wind—

The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call in the dark,
And he calls to me now from the church and not from the
gibbet—for hark!

Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking the walls—
Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good-night. I am going. He calls.

1880

MARIANA

'Mariana in the moated grange.'

Measure for Measure

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all;
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.
She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

Her tears fell with the dew at even;
Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;
She could not look on the sweet heaven,
Either at morn or eventide.
After the flitting of the bats,
When thickest dark did trance the sky,
She drew her casement-curtain by,
And glanced athwart the glooming flats.

She only said, 'The night is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

Upon the middle of the night,
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow;
The cock sung out an hour ere light;
From the dark fen the oxen's low
Came to her; without hope of change,
In sleep she'd seem to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn
About the lonely moated grange.

She only said, 'The day is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blacken'd waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
The cluster'd marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarled bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.

She only said, 'My life is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

And ever when the moon was low,
And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway.
But when the moon was very low,
And wild winds bound within their cell,
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.

She only said, 'The night is dreary,
He cometh not,' she said;
She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!'

All day within the dreamy house,
 The doors upon the hinges creak'd;
 The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
 Behind the mouldering wainscot shriek'd.
 Or from the crevice peer'd about.
 Old faces glimmer'd thro' the doors,
 Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
 Old voices called her from without.
 She only said, 'My life is dreary,
 He cometh not,' she said;
 She said, 'I am aweary, aweary,
 I would that I were dead!'

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
 The slow clock ticking, and the sound
 Which to the wooing mind aloof
 The poplar made, did all confound
 Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
 When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
 Athwart the chambers, and the day
 Was sloping toward his western bower.
 Then said she, 'I am very dreary,
 He will not come,' she said;
 She wept, 'I am aweary, aweary,
 O God, that I were dead!'

1830

MARIANA IN THE SOUTH

WITH one black shadow at its feet,
 The house thro' all the level shines,
 Close-latticed to the brooding heat,
 And silent in its dusty vines;
 A faint-blue ridge upon the right,
 An empty river-bed before,
 And shallows on a distant shore,
 In glaring sand and inlets bright.
 But 'Ave Mary,' made she moan,
 And 'Ave Mary,' night and morn,
 And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be all alone,
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

She, as her carol sadder grew,
From brow and bosom slowly down
Thro' rosy taper fingers drew
Her streaming curls of deepest brown
To left and right, and made appear
Still-lighted in a secret shrine
Her melancholy eyes divine,
The home of woe without a tear.
And 'Ave Mary,' was her moan,
'Madonna, sad is night and morn,'
And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be all alone,
To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

Till all the crimson changed, and past
Into deep orange o'er the sea,
Low on her knees herself she cast,
Before Our Lady murmur'd she;
Complaining, 'Mother, give me grace
To help me of my weary load.'
And on the liquid mirror glow'd
The clear perfection of her face.
'Is this the form,' she made her moan,
'That won his praises night and morn?'
And 'Ah,' she said, 'but I wake alone,
I sleep forgotten, I wake forlorn.'

Nor bird would sing, nor lamb would bleat,
Nor any cloud would cross the vault,
But day increased from heat to heat,
On stony drought and steaming salt;
Till now at noon she slept again,
And seem'd knee-deep in mountain grass,
And heard her native breezes pass,
And runlets babbling down the glen.
She breathed in sleep a lower moan,
And murmuring, as at night and morn,
She thought, 'My spirit is here alone,
Walks forgotten, and is forlorn.'

Dreaming, she knew it was a dream;
She felt he was and was not there.
She woke; the babble of the stream
Fell, and, without, the steady glare

Shrank one sick willow sere and small.
 The river-bed was dusty-white;
 And all the furnace of the light
 Struck up against the blinding wall.
 She whisper'd, with a stifled moan
 More inward than at night or morn,
 'Sweet Mother, let me not here alone
 Live forgotten and die forlorn.'

And, rising, from her bosom drew
 Old letters, breathing of her worth,
 For 'Love,' they said, 'must needs be true,
 To what is loveliest upon earth.'
 An image seem'd to pass the door,
 To look at her with slight, and say
 'But now thy beauty flows away,
 So be alone for evermore.'
 'O cruel heart,' she changed her tone,
 'And cruel love, whose end is scorn,
 Is this the end, to be left alone,
 To live forgotten, and die forlorn?'

But sometimes in the falling day
 An image seem'd to pass the door,
 To look into her eyes and say,
 'But thou shalt be alone no more.'
 And flaming downward over all
 From heat to heat the day decreased,
 And slowly rounded to the east
 The one black shadow from the wall.
 'The day to night,' she made her moan,
 'The day to night, the night to morn,
 And day and night I am left alone
 To live forgotten, and live forlorn.'

At eve a dry cicada sung,
 There came a sound as of the sea;
 Backward the lattice-blind she flung,
 And lean'd upon the balcony.
 There all in spaces rosy-bright
 Large Hesper glitter'd on her tears,
 And deepening thro' the silent spheres
 Heaven over heaven rose the night.

And weeping then she made her moan,
‘The night comes on that knows not morn,
When I shall cease to be all alone,
To live forgotten, and love forlorn.’

1833

From THE VISION OF SIN

WRINKLED OSTLER grim and thin!
Here is custom come your way;
Take my brute, and lead him in,
Stuff his ribs with mouldy hay.

Bitter barmaid, waning fast!
See that sheets are on my bed.
What! the flower of life is past;
It is long before you wed.

Slip-shod waiter, lank and sour,
At the Dragon on the heath!
Let us have a quiet hour,
Let us hob-and-nob with Death.

I am old, but let me drink;
Bring me spices, bring me wine;
I remember, when I think,
That my youth was half divine.

Wine is good for shrivell'd lips,
When a blanket wraps the day,
When the rotten woodland drips,
And the leaf is stamp'd in clay.

Sit thee down, and have no shame,
Cheek by jowl, and knee by knee;
What care I for any name?
What for order or degree?

Let me screw thee up a peg;
Let me loose thy tongue with wine;
Callest thou that thing a leg?
Which is thinnest? thine or mine?

Thou shalt not be saved by works,
 Thou hast been a sinner too;
 Ruin'd trunks on wither'd forks,
 Empty scarecrows, I and you!

Fill the cup, and fill the can,
 Have a rouse before the morn;
 Every moment dies a man,
 Every moment one is born.

We are men of ruin'd blood;
 Therefore comes it we are wise.
 Fish are we that love the mud,
 Rising to no fancy-flies.

Name and fame! to fly sublime
 Thro' the courts, the camps, the schools
 Is to be the ball of Time,
 Bandied by the hands of fools.

Friendship!—to be two in one—
 Let the canting liar pack!
 Well I know, when I am gone,
 How she mouths behind my back.

Virtue!—to be good and just—
 Every heart, when sifted well,
 Is a clot of warmer dust,
 Mix'd with cunning sparks of hell.

O! we two as well can look
 Whited thought and cleanly life
 As the priest, above his book
 Leering at his neighbour's wife.

Fill the cup, and fill the can,
 Have a rouse before the morn:
 Every moment dies a man,
 Every moment one is born.

Drink, and let the parties rave;
 They are fill'd with idle spleen,
 Rising, falling, like a wave,
 For they know not what they mean.

He that roars for liberty
Faster binds a tyrant's power,
And the tyrant's cruel glee
Forces on the freer hour.

Fill the can, and fill the cup;
All the windy ways of men
Are but dust that rises up,
And is lightly laid again.

Greet her with applausive breath,
Freedom, gaily doth she tread;
In her right a civic wreath,
In her left a human head.

No, I love not what is new;
She is of an ancient house,
And I think we know the hue
Of that cap upon her brows.

Let her go! her thirst she slakes
Where the bloody conduit runs,
Then her sweetest meal she makes
On the first-born of her sons.

Drink to lofty hopes that cool,—
Visions of a perfect State;
Drink we, last, the public fool,
Frantic love and frantic hate.

Chant me now some wicked stave,
Till thy drooping courage rise,
And the glow-worm of the grave
Glimmer in thy rheumy eyes.

Fear not thou to loose thy tongue,
Set thy hoary fancies free;
What is loathsome to the young
Savours well to thee and me.

Change, reverting to the years,
When thy nerves could understand
What there is in loving tears,
And the warmth of hand in hand.

Tell me tales of thy first love—
 April hopes, the fools of chance—
 Till the graves begin to move,
 And the dead begin to dance.

Fill the can, and fill the cup;
 All the windy ways of men
 Are but dust that rises up,
 And is lightly laid again.

Trooping from their mouldy dens
 The chap-fallen circle spreads—
 Welcome, fellow-citizens,
 Hollow hearts and empty heads!

You are bones, and what of that?
 Every face, however full,
 Padded round with flesh and fat,
 Is but modell'd on a skull.

Death is king, and Vivat Rex!
 Tread a measure on the stones,
 Madam—if I know your sex
 From the fashion of your bones.

No, I cannot praise the fire
 In your eye—nor yet your lip;
 All the more do I admire
 Joints of cunning workmanship.

Lo! God's likeness—the ground plan—
 Neither modell'd, glazed, nor framed;
 Buss me, thou rough sketch of man,
 Far too naked to be shamed!

Drink to Fortune, drink to Chance,
 While we keep a little breath!
 Drink to heavy Ignorance!
 Hob-and-nob with brother Death!

Thou art mazed, the night is long,
 And the longer night is near—
 What! I am not all as wrong
 As a bitter jest is dear.

Youthful hopes, by scores, to all,
When the locks are crisp and curl'd;
Unto me my maudlin gall
And my mockeries of the world.

Fill the cup, and fill the can;
Mingle madness, mingle scorn!
Dregs of life, and lees of man;
Yet we will not die forlorn.

1842

MERLIN AND THE GLEAM

O YOUNG Mariner,
You from the haven
Under the sea-cliff,
You that are watching
The gray Magician
With eyes of wonder,
I am a Merlin,
And *I* am dying,
I am a Merlin
Who follow The Gleam.

II

Mighty the Wizard
Who found me at sunrise
Sleeping, and woke me
And learn'd me Magic!
Great the Master,
And sweet the Magic,
When over the valley,
In early summers,
Over the mountain,
On human faces,
And all around me,
Moving to melody,
Floated The Gleam.

POEMS AND BALLADS

III

Once at the croak of a Raven who crost it
A barbarous people,
Blind to the magic
And deaf to the melody,
Snarl'd at and cursed me.
A demon vext me,
The light retreated,
The landskip darken'd,
The melody deaden'd,
The Master whisper'd,
'Follow The Gleam.'

IV

Then to the melody,
Over a wilderness
Gliding, and glancing at
Elf of the woodland,
Gnome of the cavern,
Griffin and Giant,
And dancing of Fairies
In desolate hollows,
And wraiths of the mountain,
And rolling of dragons
By warble of water,
Or cataract music
Of falling torrents,
Flitted The Gleam.

V

Down from the mountain
And over the level,
And streaming and shining on
Silent river,
Silvery willow,
Pasture and plowland,
Innocent maidens,
Garrulous children,
Homestead and harvest,

Reaper and gleaner,
And rough-ruddy faces
Of lowly labour,
Slided The Gleam—

VI

Then, with a melody
Stronger and statelier,
Led me at length
To the city and palace
Of Arthur the King;
Touch'd at the golden
Cross of the churches,
Flash'd on the tournament,
Flicker'd and bicker'd
From helmet to helmet,
And last on the forehead
Of Arthur the blameless
Rested The Gleam.

VII

Clouds and darkness
Closed upon Camelot;
Arthur had vanish'd
I knew not whither,
The king who loved me,
And cannot die;
Far out of the darkness
Silent and slowly
The Gleam, that had waned to a wintry glimmer
On icy fallow
And faded forest,
Drew to the valley
Named of the shadow,
And slowly brightening
Out of the glimmer,
And slowly moving again to a melody
Yearningly tender,
Fell on the shadow,
No longer a shadow,
But clothed with The Gleam.

VIII

And broader and brighter
The Gleam flying onward,
Wed to the melody,
Sang thro' the world;
And slower and fainter,
Old and weary,
But eager to follow,
I saw, whenever
In passing it glanced upon
Hamlet or city,
That under the Crosses
The dead man's garden,
The mortal hillock,
Would break into blossom;
And so to the land's
Last limit I came—
And can no longer,
But die rejoicing,
For thro' the Magic
Of Him the Mighty,
Who taught me in childhood,
There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in Heaven
Hovers The Gleam.

IX

Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel,
And crowd your canvas,
And, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow The Gleam.

PART II

MAUD

A MONODRAMA

1855

PART I

I

I

I HATE the dreadful hollow behind the little wood;
Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red heath,
The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
An Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers 'Death.'

II

For there in the ghastly pit long since a body was found,
His who had given me life—O father! O God! was it well?—
Mangled, and flatten'd, and crush'd, and dented into the ground;
There yet lies the rock that fell with him when he fell.

III

Did he fling himself down? who knows? for a vast speculation
had fail'd,
And ever he mutter'd and madden'd, and ever wann'd with
despair,
And out he walk'd when the wind like a broken worldling wail'd,
And the flying gold of the ruin'd woodlands drove thro' the air.

IV

I remember the time, for the roots of my hair were stirr'd
By a shuffled step, by a dead weight trail'd, by a whisper'd fright,
'And my pulses closed their gates with a shock on my heart as I
heard
The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divide the shuddering night.

MAUD

V

Villainy somewhere! whose? One says, we are villains all.
Not he; his honest fame should at least by me be maintained;
But that old man, now lord of the broad estate and the Hall,
Dropt off gorged from a scheme that had left us flaccid and
drain'd.

VI

Why do they prate of the blessings of peace? we have made them
a curse,
Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own;
And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse
Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearth-
stone?

VII

But these are the days of advance, the works of the men of mind,
When who but a fool would have faith in a tradesman's ware or
his word?
Is it peace or war? Civil war, as I think, and that of a kind
The viler, as underhand, not openly bearing the sword.

VIII

Sooner or later I too may passively take the print
Of the golden age—why not? I have neither hope nor trust;
May make my heart as a millstone, set my face as a flint,
Cheat and be cheated, and die—who knows? we are ashes and
dust.

IX

Peace sitting under her olive, and slurring the days gone by,
When the poor are hovell'd and hustled together, each sex, like
swine,
When only the ledger lives, and when only not all men lie;
Peace in her vineyard—yes!—but a company forges the wine.

X

And the vitriol madness flushes up in the ruffian's head,
Till the filthy by-lane rings to the yell of the trampled wife,
And chalk and alum and plaster are sold to the poor for bread,
And the spirit of murder works in the very means of life,

XI

And Sleep must lie down arm'd, for the villainous centre-bits
Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless nights,
While another is cheating the sick of a few last gasps, as he sits
To pestle a poison'd poison behind his crimson lights.

XII

When a Mammonite mother kills her babe for a burial fee,
And Timour-Mammon grins on a pile of children's bones,
Is it peace or war? better, war! loud war by land and by sea,
War with a thousand battles, and shaking a hundred thrones!

XIII

For I trust if an enemy's fleet came yonder round by the hill,
And the rushing battle-bolt sang from the three decker out of
the foam,
That the smooth-faced, snub-nosed rogue would leap from his
counter and till,
And strike, if he could, were it but with his cheating yardwand,
home.—

XIV

What! am I raging alone as my father raged in his mood?
Must *I* too creep to the hollow and dash myself down and die
Rather than hold by the law that I made, nevermore to brood
On a horror of shatter'd limbs and a wretched swindler's lie?

XV

Would there be sorrow for *me*? there was *love* in the passionate
shriek,
Love for the silent thing that had made false haste to the grave—
Wrapt in a cloak, as I saw him, and thought he would rise and
speak
And rave at the lie and the liar, ah God, as he used to rave.

XVI

I am sick of the Hall and the hill, I am sick of the moor and the
main.
Why should I stay? can a sweeter chance ever come to me here?

MAUD

O, having the nerves of motion as well as the nerves of pain,
Were it not wise if I fled from the place and the pit and the fear?

XVII

Workmen up at the Hall!—they are coming back from abroad;
The dark old place will be gilt by the touch of a millionaire.
I have heard, I know not whence, of the singular beauty of
Maud;
I play'd with the girl when a child; she promised then to be fair.

XVIII

Maud, with her venturous climbings and tumbles and childish
escapes,
Maud, the delight of the village, the ringing joy of the Hall,
Maud, with her sweet purse-mouth when my father dangled the
grapes,
Maud, the beloved of my mother, the moon-faced darling of
all,—

XIX

What is she now? My dreams are bad. She may bring me a curse.
No, there is fatter game on the moor; she will let me alone.
Thanks; for the fiend best knows whether woman or man be the
worse.
I will bury myself in myself, and the Devil may pipe to his own.

II

Long have I sigh'd for a calm; God grant I may find it at last!
It will never be broken by Maud; she has neither savour nor salt,
But a cold and clear-cut face, as I found when her carriage past,
Perfectly beautiful; let it be granted her; where is the fault?
All that I saw—for her eyes were downcast, not to be seen—
Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
Dead perfection, no more; nothing more, if it had not been
For a chance of travel, a paleness, an hour's defect of the rose,
Or an underlip, you may call it a little too ripe, too full,
Or the least little delicate aquiline curve in a sensitive nose,
From which I escaped heart-free, with the least little touch of
spleen.

III

Cold and clear-cut face, why come you so cruelly meek,
Breaking a slumber in which all spleenful folly was drown'd?
Pale with the golden beam of an eyelash dead on the cheek,
Passionless, pale, cold face, star-sweet on a gloom profound;
Womanlike, taking revenge too deep for a transient wrong
Done but in thought to your beauty, and ever as pale as before
Growing and fading and growing upon me without a sound,
Luminous, gemlike, ghostlike, deathlike, half the night long
Growing and fading and growing, till I could bear it no more,
But arose, and all by myself in my own dark garden ground,
Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung shipwrecking roar,
Now to the scream of a madden'd beach dragg'd down by the
 wave,
Walk'd in a wintry wind by a ghastly glimmer, and found
The shining daffodil dead, and Orion low in his grave.

IV

I

A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime
In the little grove where I sit—ah, wherefore cannot I be
Like things of the season gay, like the bountiful season bland,
When the far-off sail is blown by the breeze of a softer clime,
Half-lost in the liquid azure bloom of a crescent of sea,
The silent sapphire-spangled marriage ring of the land?

II

Below me, there, is the village, and looks how quiet and small!
And yet bubbles o'er like a city, with gossip, scandal, and spite;
And Jack on his ale-house bench has as many lies as a Czar;
And here on the landward side, by a red rock, glimmers the Hall;
And up in the high Hall-garden I see her pass like a light;
But sorrow seize me if ever that light be my leading star!

III

When have I bow'd to her father, the wrinkled head of the race?
I met her to-day with her brother, but not to her brother I bow'd;

MAUD

I bow'd to his lady-sister as she rode by on the moor,
But the fire of a foolish pride flash'd over her beautiful face.
O child, you wrong your beauty, believe it, in being so proud;
Your father has wealth well-gotten, and I am nameless and poor.

IV

I keep but a man and a maid, ever ready to slander and steal;
I know it, and smile a hard-set smile, like a stoic, or like
A wiser epicurean, and let the world have its way.
For nature is one with rapine, a harm no preacher can heal;
The Mayfly is torn by the swallow, the sparrow spear'd by the
shrike,
And the whole little wood where I sit is a world of plunder and
prey.

V

We are puppets, Man in his pride, and Beauty fair in her flower;
Do we move ourselves, or are moved by an unseen hand at a
game
That pushes us off from the board, and others ever succeed?
Ah yet, we cannot be kind to each other here for an hour;
We whisper, and hint, and chuckle, and grin at a brother's
shame;
However we brave it out, we men are a little breed.

VI

A monstrous eft was of old the lord and master of earth,
For him did his high sun flame, and his river billowing ran,
And he felt himself in his force to be Nature's crowning race.
As nine months go to the shaping an infant ripe for his birth,
So many a million of ages have gone to the making of man:
He now is first, but is he the last? is he not too base?

VII

The man of science himself is fonder of glory, and vain,
An eye well-practised in nature, a spirit bounded and poor;
The passionate heart of the poet is whirl'd into folly and vice.
I would not marvel at either, but keep a temperate brain;
For not to desire or admire, if a man could learn it, were more
Than to walk all day like the sultan of old in a garden of spice.

VIII

For the drift of the Maker is dark, an Isis hid by the veil.
Who knows the way of the world, how God will bring them
about?
Our planet is one, the suns are many, the world is wide.
Shall I weep if a Poland fall? shall I shriek if a Hungary fail?
Or our infant civilization be ruled with rod or with knout?
I have not made the world, and He that made it will guide.

IX

Be mine a philosopher's life in the quiet woodland ways,
Where if I cannot be gay let a passionless peace be my lot,
Far-off from the clamour of liars belied in the hubbub of lies;
From the long-neck'd geese of the world that are ever hissing
dispraise
Because their natures are little, and, whether he heed it or not,
Where each man walks with his head in a cloud of poisonous
flies.

X

And most of all would I flee from the cruel madness of love
The honey of poison-flowers and all the measureless ill.
Ah Maud, you milk-white fawn, you are all unmeet for a wife.
Your mother is mute in her grave as her image in marble above;
Your father is ever in London, you wander about at your will;
You have but fed on the roses and lain in the lilies of life.

V

I

A voice by the cedar tree
In the meadow under the Hall!
She is singing an air that is known to me,
A passionate ballad gallant and gay,
A martial song like a trumpet's call!
Singing alone in the morning of life,
In the happy morning of life and of May,
Singing of men that in battle array,
Ready in heart and ready in hand,
March with banner and bugle and fife
To the death, for their native land.

MAUD

II

Maud with her exquisite face,
And wild voice pealing up to the sunny sky,
And feet like sunny gems on an English green,
Maud in the light of her youth and her grace,
Singing of Death, and of Honour that cannot die,
Till I well could weep for a time so sordid and mean,
And myself so languid and base.

III

Silence, beautiful voice!
Be still, for you only trouble the mind
With a joy in which I cannot rejoice,
A glory I shall not find.
Still! I will hear you no more,
For your sweetness hardly leaves me a choice
But to move to the meadow and fall before
Her feet on the meadow grass, and adore,
Not her, who is neither courtly nor kind,
Not her, not her, but a voice.

VI

I

Morning arises stormy and pale,
No sun, but a wannish glare
In fold upon fold of hueless cloud;
And the budded peaks of the wood are bow'd,
Caught and cuff'd by the gale:
I had fancied it would be fair.

II

Whom but Maud should I meet
Last night, when the sunset burn'd
On the blossom'd gable-ends
At the head of the village street,
Whom but Maud should I meet?
And she touch'd my hand with a smile so sweet,
She made me divine amends
For a courtesy not return'd.

III

And thus a delicate spark
Of glowing and growing light
Thro' the livelong hours of the dark
Kept itself warm in the heart of my dreams,
Ready to burst in a colour'd flame;
Till at last, when the morning came
In a cloud, it faded, and seems
But an ashen-gray delight.

IV

What if with her sunny hair,
And smile as sunny as cold,
She meant to weave me a snare
Of some coquettish deceit,
Cleopatra-like as of old
To entangle me when we met,
To have her lion roll in a silken net
And fawn at a victor's feet.

V

Ah, what shall I be at fifty
Should Nature keep me alive,
If I find the world so bitter
When I am but twenty-five?
Yet, if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seem'd,
And her smile were all that I dream'd,
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet.

VI

What if tho' her eye seem'd full
Of a kind intent to me,
What if that dandy-despot, he,
That jewell'd mass of millinery,
That oil'd and curl'd Assyrian Bull
Smelling of musk and of insolence,
Her brother, from whom I keep aloof,
Who wants the finer politic sense

MAUD

To mask, tho' but in his own behoof,
With a glassy smile his brutal scorn—
What if he had told her yesternorn
How prettily for his own sweet sake
A face of tenderness might be feign'd,
And a moist mirage in desert eyes,
That so, when the rotten hustings shake
In another month to his brazen lies,
A wretched vote may be gain'd?

VII

For a raven ever croaks, at my side,
Keep watch and ward, keep watch and ward,
Or thou wilt prove their tool.
Yea, too, myself from myself I guard,
For often a man's own angry pride
Is cap and bells for a fool.

VIII

Perhaps the smile and tender tone
Came out of her pitying womanhood,
For am I not, am I not, here alone
So many a summer since she died,
My mother, who was so gentle and good?
Living alone in an empty house,
Here half-hid in the gleaming wood,
Where I hear the dead at midday moan,
And the shrieking rush of the wainscot mouse,
And my own sad name in corners cried,
When the shiver of dancing leaves is thrown
About its echoing chambers wide,
Till a morbid hate and horror have grown
Of a world in which I have hardly mixt,
And a morbid eating lichen fixt
On a heart half-turned to stone.

IX

O heart of stone, are you flesh, and caught
By that you swore to withstand?
For what was it else within me wrought
But, I fear, the new strong wine of love,

That made my tongue so stammer and trip
When I saw the treasured splendour, her hand,
Come sliding out of her sacred glove,
And the sunlight broke from her lip?

X

I have play'd with her when a child;
She remembers it now we meet.
Ah, well, well, I *may* be beguiled
By some coquettish deceit.
Yet, if she were not a cheat,
If Maud were all that she seem'd,
And her smile had all that I dream'd,
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet.

VII

I

Did I hear it half in a doze
Long since, I know not where?
Did I dream it an hour ago,
When asleep in this arm-chair?

II

Men were drinking together,
Drinking and talking of me:
'Well, if it prove a girl, the boy
Will have plenty; so let it be.'

III

It is an echo of something
Read with a boy's delight,
Viziers nodding together
In some Arabian night?

IV

Strange, that I hear two men,
Somewhere, talking of me:
'Well, if it prove a girl, my boy
Will have plenty; so let it be.'

MAUD

VIII

She came to the village church,
And sat by a pillar alone;
An angel watching an urn
Wept over her, carved in stone;
And once, but once, she lifted her eyes,
And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blush'd
To find they were met by my own;
And suddenly, sweetly, my heart beat stronger
And thicker, until I heard no longer
The snowy-banded, dilettante,
Delicate-handed priest intone;
And thought, is it pride? and mused and sigh'd,
'No surely, now it cannot be pride.'

IX

I was walking a mile,
More than a mile from the shore,
The sun look'd out with a smile
Betwixt the cloud and the moor;
And riding at set of day
Over the dark moor land,
Rapidly riding far away,
She waved to me with her hand.
There were two at her side,
Something flash'd in the sun,
Down by the hill I saw them ride,
In a moment they were gone;
Like a sudden spark
Struck vainly in the night,
Then returns the dark
With no more hope of light.

X

I

Sick, am I sick of a jealous dread?
Was not one of the two at her side
This new-made lord, whose splendour plucks
The slavish hat from the villager's head?

Whose old grandfather has lately died,
Gone to a blacker pit, for whom
Grimy nakedness dragging his trucks
And laying his trams in a poison'd gloom
Wrought, till he crept from a gutted mine
Master of half a servile shire,
And left his coal all turn'd into gold
To a grandson, first of his noble line,
Rich in the grace all women desire,
Strong in the power that all men adore,
And simpler and set their voices lower,
And soften as if to a girl, and hold
Awe-stricken breaths at a work divine,
Seeing his gewgaw castle shine,
New as his title, built last year,
There amid perky larches and pine,
And over the sullen-purple moor—
Look at it—pricking a cockney ear.

II

What, has he found my jewel out?
For one of the two that rode at her side
Bound for the Hall, I am sure was he;
Bound for the Hall, and I think for a bride.
Blithe would her brother's acceptance be.
Maud could be gracious too, no doubt,
To a lord, a captain, a padded shape,
A bought commission, a waxen face,
A rabbit mouth that is ever agape—
Bought? what is it he cannot buy?
And therefore splenetic, personal, base,
A wounded thing with a rancorous cry,
At war with myself and a wretched race,
Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I.

III

Last week came one to the county town,
To preach our poor little army down,
And play the game of the despot kings,
Tho' the state has done it and thrice as well
This broad-brimm'd hawker of holy things,
Whose ear is cramm'd with his cotton, and rings

MAUD

Even in dreams to the chink of his pence,
This huckster put down war! can he tell
Whether war be a cause or a consequence?
Put down the passions that make earth hell!
Down with ambition, avarice, pride,
Jealousy, down! cut off from the mind
The bitter springs of anger and fear!
Down too, down at your own fireside,
With the evil tongue and the evil ear,
For each is at war with mankind!

IV

I wish I could hear again
The chivalrous battle-song
That she warbled alone in her joy!
I might persuade myself then
She would not do herself this great wrong,
To take a wanton dissolute boy
For a man and leader of men.

V

Ah God, for a man with heart, head, hand,
Like some of the simple great ones gone
For ever and ever by,
One still strong man in a blatant land,
Whatever they call him—what care I?—
Aristocrat, democrat, autocrat—one
Who can rule and dare not lie!

VI

And ah for a man to arise in me,
That the man I am may cease to be!

XI

I

O let the solid ground
Not fail beneath my feet
Before my life has found
What some have found so sweet!

Then let come what come may,
What matter if I go mad,
I shall have had my day.

II

Let the sweet heavens endure,
Not close and darken above me
Before I am quite quite sure
That there is one to love me!
Then let come what come may
To a life that has been so sad,
I shall have had my day.

XII

I

Birds in the high Hall-garden
When twilight was falling,
Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
They were crying and calling.

II

Where was Maud? in our wood;
And I—who else?—was with her,
Gathering woodland lilies,
Myriads blow together.

III

Birds in our wood sang
Ringing thro' the valleys,
Maud is here, here, here
In among the lilies.

IV

I kiss'd her slender hand,
She took the kiss sedately;
Maud is not seventeen,
But she is tall and stately.

MAUD

V

I to cry out on pride
Who have won her favour!
O Maud were sure of heaven
If lowliness could save her!

VI

I know the way she went
Home with her maiden posy,
For her feet have touch'd the meadows
And left the daisies rosy.

VII

Birds in the high Hall-garden
Were crying and calling to her,
Where is Maud, Maud, Maud?
One is come to woo her.

VIII

Look, a horse at the door,
And little King Charley snarling!
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
You are not her darling.

XIII

I

Scorn'd, to be scorn'd by one that I scorn,
Is that a matter to make me fret?
That a calamity hard to be borne?
Well, he may live to hate me yet.
Fool that I am to be vexed with his pride!
I past him, I was crossing his lands;
He stood on the path a little aside;
His face, as I grant, in spite of spite,
Has a broad-blown comeliness, red and white,
And six feet two, as I think he stands;
But his essences turn'd the live air sick,

And barbarous opulence jewel-thick
Sunn'd itself on his breast and his hands.

II

Who shall call me ungentle, unfair?
I long'd so heartily then and there
To give him the grasp of fellowship;
But while I past he was humming an air,
Stopt, and then with a riding-whip
Leisurely tapping a glossy boot,
And curving a contumelious lip,
Gorgonized me from head to foot
With a stony British stare.

III

Why sits he here in his father's chair?
That old man never comes to his place;
Shall I believe him ashamed to be seen?
For only once, in the village street,
Last year, I caught a glimpse of his face,
A gray old wolf and a lean.
Scarcely, now, would I call him a cheat;
For then, perhaps, as a child of deceit,
She might by a true descent be untrue;
And Maud is as true as Maud is sweet,
Tho' I fancy her sweetness only due
To the sweeter blood by the other side;
Her mother has been a thing complete,
However she came to be so allied.
And fair without, faithful within,
Maud to him is nothing akin.
Some peculiar mystic grace
Made her only the child of her mother
And heap'd the whole inherited sin
On that huge scapegoat of the race,
All, all upon the brother.

IV

Peace, angry spirit, and let him be!
Has not his sister smiled on me?

MAUD

XIV

I

Maud had a garden of roses
And lilies fair on a lawn;
There she walks in her state
And tends upon bed and bower,
And thither I climb'd at dawn
And stood by her garden-gate.
A lion ramps at the top,
He is claspt by a passion-flower.

II

Maud's own little oak-room—
Which Maud, like a precious stone
Set in the heart of the carven gloom,
Lights with herself, when alone
She sits by her music and books
And her brother lingers late
With a roystering company—looks
Upon Maud's own garden-gate;
And I thought as I stood, if a hand, as white
As ocean-foam in the moon, were laid
On the hasp of the window, and my Delight
Had a sudden desire, like a glorious ghost, to glide,
Like a beam of the seventh heaven, down to my side,
There were but a step to be made.

III

The fancy flatter'd my mind,
And again seem'd overbold;
Now I thought that she cared for me,
Now I thought she was kind
Only because she was cold.

IV

I heard no sound where I stood
But the rivulet on from the lawn
Running down to my own dark wood,
Or the voice of the long sea-wave as it swell'd
Now and then in the dim-gray dawn;

But I look'd, and round, all round the house I beheld
The death-white curtain drawn,
Felt a horror over me creep,
Prickle my skin and catch my breath,
Knew that the death-white curtain meant but sleep,
Yet I shudder'd and thought like a fool of the sleep of death.

XV

So dark a mind within me dwells,
And I make myself such evil cheer,
That if *I* be dear to some one else,
Then some one else may have much to fear;
But if *I* be dear to some one else,
Then I should be to myself more dear.
Shall I not take care of all that I think,
Yea ev'n of wretched meat and drink,
If I be dear,
If I be dear to some one else?

XVI

I

This lump of earth has left his estate
The lighter by the loss of his weight;
And so that he find what he went to seek,
And fulsome Pleasure clog him, and drown
His heart in the gross mud-honey of town,
He may stay for a year who has gone for a week.
But this is the day when I must speak,
And I see my Oread coming down,
O this is the day!
O beautiful creature, what am I
That I dare to look her way?
Think I may hold dominion sweet,
Lord of the pulse that is lord of her breast.
And dream of her beauty with tender dread,
From the delicate Arab arch of her feet
To the grace that, bright and light as the crest
Of a peacock, sits on her shining head,
And she knows it not—O, if she knew it,
To know her beauty might half undo it!

MAUD

I know it the one bright thing to save
My yet young life in the wilds of Time,
Perhaps from madness, perhaps from crime,
Perhaps from a selfish grave.

II

What, if she be fasten'd to this fool lord,
Dare I bid her abide by her word?
Should I love her so well if she
Had given her word to a thing so low?
Shall I love her as well if she
Can break her word were it even for me?
I trust that it is not so.

III

Catch not my breath, O clamorous heart,
Let not my tongue be a thrall to my eye,
For I must tell her before we part,
I must tell her, or die.

XVII

Go not, happy day,
From the shining fields,
Go not, happy day,
Till the maiden yields.
Rosy is the West,
Rosy is the South,
Roses are her cheeks,
And a rose her mouth.
When the happy Yes
Falters from her lips,
Pass and blush the news
Over glowing ships;
Over blowing seas,
Over seas at rest,
Pass the happy news,
Blush it thro' the West;
Till the red man dance
By his red cedar-tree,

And the red man's babe
Leap, beyond the sea.
Blush from West to East,
Blush from East to West,
Till the West is East,
Blush it thro' the West.
Rosy is the West,
Rosy is the South,
Roses are her cheeks,
And a rose her mouth.

XVIII

I

I have led her home, my love, my only friend.
There is none like her, none.
And never yet so warmly ran my blood
And sweetly, on and on
Calming itself to the long-wish'd-for end,
Full to the banks, close on the promised good.

II

None like her, none.
Just now the dry-tongued laurels' pattering talk
Seem'd her light foot along the garden walk,
And shook my heart to think she comes once more;
But even then I heard her close the door,
The gates of heaven are closed, and she is gone.

III

There is none like her, none,
Nor will be when our summers have deceased.
O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East,
Sighing for Lebanon,
Dark cedar, tho' thy limbs have here increased,
Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
And looking to the South, and fed
With honey'd rain and delicate air,
And haunted by the starry head
Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,
And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;

MAUD

And over whom thy darkness must have spread
With such delight as theirs of old, thy great
Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
Shadowing the snow-limb'd Eve from whom she came.

IV

Here will I lie, while these long branches sway,
And you fair stars that crown a happy day
Go in and out as if at merry play,
Who am no more so all forlorn
As when it seem'd far better to be born
To labour and the mattock-harden'd hand
Than nursed at ease and brought to understand
A sad astrology, the boundless plan
That makes you tyrants in your iron skies,
Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
His nothingness into man.

V

But now shine on, and what care I,
Who in this stormy gulf have found a pearl
The countercharm of space and hollow sky,
And do accept my madness, and would die
To save from some slight shame one simple girl.

VI

Would die, for sullen-seeming Death may give
More life to Love than is or ever was
In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to live.
Let no one ask me how it came to pass;
It seems that I am happy, that to me
A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

VII

Not die, but live a life of truest breath,
And teach true life to fight with mortal wrongs.
O, why should Love, like men in drinking-songs
Spice his fair banquet with the dust of death?

Make answer, Maud my bliss,
Maud made my Maud by that long loving kiss,
Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this?
'The dusky strand of Death inwoven here
With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself more dear.'

VIII

Is that enchanted moan only the swell
Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?
And hark the clock within, the silver knell
Of twelve sweet hours that past in bridal white,
And died to live, long as my pulses play;
But now by this my love had closed her sight
And given false death her hand, and stol'n away
To dreamful wastes where footless fancies dwell
Among the fragments of the golden day.
May nothing there her maiden grace affright!
Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy spell.
My bride to be, my evermore delight,
My own heart's heart, my ownest own, farewell;
It is but for a little space I go:
And ye meanwhile far over moon and fell
Beat to the noiseless music of the night!
Has our whole earth gone nearer to the glow
Of your soft splendours that you look so bright?
I have climb'd nearer out of lonely hell.
Beat happy stars, timing with things below,
Beat with my heart more blest than heart can tell,
Blest, but for some dark undercurrent woe
That seems to draw—but it shall not be so:
Let all be well, be well.

XIX

I

Her brother is coming back to-night,
Breaking up my dream of delight.

II

My dream? do I dream of bliss?
I have walk'd away with Truth.

MAUD

O when did a morning shine
So rich in atonement as this
For my dark-dawning youth,
Darken'd watching a mother decline
And that dead man at her heart and mine;
For who was left to watch her but I?
Yet so did I let my freshness die.

III

I trust that I did not talk
To gentle Maud in our walk—
For often in lonely wanderings
I have cursed him even to lifeless things—
But I trust that I did not talk,
Not touch on her father's sin.
I am sure I did but speak
Of my mother's faded cheek
When it slowly grew so thin
That I felt she was slowly dying
Vext with lawyers and harass'd with debt:
For how often I caught her with eyes all wet,
Shaking her head at her son and sighing
A word of trouble within!

IV

And Maud too, Maud was moved
To speak of the mother she loved
As one scarce less forlorn,
Dying abroad and it seems apart
From him who has ceased to share her heart,
And ever mourning over the feud,
The household Fury sprinkled with blood
By which our houses are torn.
How strange was what she said,
When only Maud and the brother
Hung over her dying bed—
That Maud's dark father and mine
Had bound us one to the other,
Betrothed us over their wine,
On the day when Maud was born;
Seal'd her mine from her first sweet breath!

Mine, mine by a right, from birth till death!
Mine, mine—our fathers have sworn!

V

But the true blood spilt had in it a heat
To dissolve the precious seal on a bound,
That, if left uncancell'd, had been so sweet;
And none of us thought of a something beyond,
A desire that awoke in the heart of the child,
As it were a duty done to the tomb,
To be friends for her sake, to be reconciled;
And I was cursing them and my doom,
And letting a dangerous thought run wild
While often abroad in the fragrant gloom
Of foreign churches—I see her there,
Bright English lily, breathing a prayer
To be friends, to be reconciled!

VI

But then what a flint is he!
Abroad, at Florence, at Rome,
I find whenever she touch'd on me
This brother had laugh'd her down,
And at last, when each came home,
He had darken'd into a frown,
Chid her, and forbid her to speak
To me, her friend of the years before;
And this was what had redden'd her cheek
When I bow'd to her on the moor.

VII

Yet Maud, altho' not blind
To the faults of his heart and mind,
I see she cannot but love him,
And says he is rough but kind,
And wishes me to approve him,
And tells me, when she lay
Sick once, with a fear of worse,
That he left his wine and horses and play,
Sat with her, read to her, night and day,
And tended her like a nurse.

MAUD

VIII

Kind? but the death-bed desire
Spurn'd by this heir of the liar—
Rough but kind? yet I know
He has plotted against me in this
That he plots against me still.
Kind to Maud? that were not amiss.
Well, rough but kind; why, let it be so,
For shall not Maud have her will?

IX

For Maud, so tender and true,
As long as my life endures
I feel I shall owe you a debt
That I can never hope to pay;
And if ever I should forget
That I owe this debt to you
And for your sweet sake to yours,
O then, what then shall I say?—
If ever I *should* forget,
May God make me more wretched
Than ever I have been yet!

X

So now I have sworn to bury
All this dead body of hate,
I feel so free and so clear
By the loss of that dead weight,
That I should grow light-headed, I fear,
Fantastically merry,
But that her brother comes, like a blight
On my fresh hope, to the Hall to-night.

XX

I

Strange, that I felt so gay,
Strange, that I tried to-day
To beguile her melancholy;
The Sultan, as we name him—

She did not wish to blame him—
But he vexed her and perplexed her
With his worldly talk and folly.
Was it gentle to reprove her
For stealing out of view
From a little lazy lover
Who but claims her as his due?
Or for chilling his caresses
By the coldness of her manners,
Nay, the plainness of her dresses?
Now I know her but in two,
Nor can pronounce upon it
If one should ask me whether
The habit, hat, and feather,
Or the frock and gipsy bonnet
Be the neater and completer;
For nothing can be sweeter
Than maiden Maud in either.

II

But to-morrow, if we live,
Our ponderous squire will give
A grand political dinner
To half the squirrelings near;
And Maud will wear her jewels,
And the bird of prey will hover,
And the titmouse hope to win her
With his chirrup at her ear.

III

A grand political dinner
To the men of many acres,
A gathering of the Tory,
A dinner and then a dance
For the maids and marriage-makers,
And every eye but mine will glance
At Maud in all her glory.

IV

For I am not invited,
But, with the Sultan's pardon,

MAUD

I am all as well delighted,
For I know her own rose-garden,
And mean to linger in it
Till the dancing will be over;
And then, O then, come out to me
For a minute, but for a minute,
Come out to your own true lover,
That your true lover may see
Your glory also, and render
All homage to his own darling,
Queen Maud in all her splendour.

XXI

Rivulet crossing my ground,
And bringing me down from the Hall
This garden-rose that I found,
Forgetful of Maud and me,
And lost in trouble and moving round
Here at the head of a tinkling fall,
And trying to pass to the sea;
O rivulet, born at the Hall,
My Maud has sent it by thee—
If I read her sweet will right—
On a blushing mission to me,
Saying in odour and colour, 'Ah, be
Among the roses to-night.'

XXII

Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the rose is blown.

II

For a breeze of morning moves,
And the planet of Love is on high,

Beginning to faint in the light that she loves
On a bed of daffodil sky,
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
To faint in his light and to die.

III

All night have the roses heard
The flute, violin, bassoon;
All night has the casement jessamine stirr'd
To the dancers dancing in tune;
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
And a hush with the setting moon.

IV

I said to the lily, 'There is but one,
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play.'
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

V

I said to the rose, 'The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine,' so I swear to the rose,
'For ever and ever, mine.'

VI

And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
As the music clash'd in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to the wood,
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

MAUD

VII

From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
That whenever a March-wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet
And the valleys of Paradise.

VIII

The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
That white lake-blossom fell into the lake
As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sigh'd for the dawn and thee.

IX

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dancers are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun.

X

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate.
The red rose cries, 'She is near, she is near,'
And the white rose weeps, 'She is late,'
And the larkspur listens, 'I hear, I hear,'
And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'

XI

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;

My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead,
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

PART II

I

I

'THE fault was mine, the fault was mine'—
Why am I sitting here so stunn'd and still,
Plucking the harmless wild-flower on the hill?—
It is the guilty hand!—
And there arises ever a passionate cry
From underneath in the darkening land—
What is it, that has been done?
O dawn of Eden bright over earth and sky,
The fires of hell brake out of thy rising sun,
The fires of hell and of hate;
For she, sweet soul, had hardly spoken a word,
When her brother ran in his rage to the gate,
He came with the babe-faced lord,
Heap'd on her terms of disgrace;
And while she wept, and I strove to be cool,
He fiercely gave me the lie,
Till I with fierce and anger spoke,
And he struck me, madman, over the face,
Struck me before the languid fool,
Who was gaping and grinning by;
Struck for himself an evil stroke;
Wrought for his house an irredeemable woe.
For front to front in an hour we stood,
And a million horrible bellowing echoes broke
From the red-ribb'd hollow behind the wood,
And thunder'd up into heaven the Christless code
That must have life for a blow.
Ever and ever afresh they seem'd to grow.
Was it he lay there with a fading eye?
'The fault was mine,' he whisper'd, 'fly!'
Then glided out of the joyous wood

MAUD

The ghastly Wraith of one that I know,
And there rang on a sudden a passionate cry,
A cry for a brother's blood;
It will ring in my heart and my ears, till I die, till I die.

II

Is it gone? my pulses beat—
What was it? a lying trick of the brain?
Yet I thought I saw her stand,
A shadow there at my feet,
High over the shadowing land.
It is gone; and the heavens fall in a gentle rain,
When they should burst and drown with deluging storms
The feeble vassals of wine and anger and lust,
The little hearts that know not how to forgive.
Arise, my God, and strike, for we hold Thee just,
Strike dead the whole weak race of venomous worms,
That sting each other here in the dust;
We are not worthy to live.

II

I

See what a lovely shell,
Small and pure as a pearl,
Lying close to my foot,
Frail, but a work divine,
Made so fairly well
With delicate spire and whorl,
How exquisitely minute,
A miracle of design!

II

What is it? a learned man
Could give it a clumsy name.
Let him name it who can,
The beauty would be the same.

III

The tiny cell is forlorn,
Void of the little living will

That made it stir on the shore.
Did he stand at the diamond door
Of this house in a rainbow frill?
Did he push, when he was uncurl'd,
A golden foot on a fairy horn
Thro' his dim water-world?

IV

Slight, to be crush'd with a tap
Of my finger-nail on the sand,
Small, but a work divine,
Frail, but a force to withstand,
Year upon year, the shock
Of cataract seas that snap
The three-decker's oaken spine
Athwart the ledges of rock,
Here on the Breton strand!

V

Breton, not Briton; here
Like a shipwreck'd man on a coast
Of ancient fable and fear—
Plagued with a flitting to and fro,
A disease, a hard mechanic ghost
That never came from on high
Nor ever arose from below,
But only moves with the moving eye,
Flying along the land and the main—
Why should it look like Maud?
Am I to be overawed
By what I cannot but know
Is a juggle born of the brain?

VI

Back from the Breton coast,
Sick of a nameless fear,
Back to the dark sea-line
Looking, thinking of all I have lost;
An old song vexes my ear,
But that of Lamech is mine.

MAUD

VII

For years, a measureless ill,
For years, for ever, to part—
But she, she would love me still;
And as long, O God, as she
Have a grain of love for me,
So long, no doubt, no doubt,
Shall I nurse in my dark heart,
However weary, a spark of will
Not to be trampled out.

VIII

Strange, that the mind, when fraught
With a passion so intense
One would think that it well
Might drown all life in the eye,—
That it should, by being so overwrought,
Suddenly strike on a sharper sense
For a shell, or a flower, little things
Which else would have been past by!
And now I remember, I,
When he lay dying there,
I noticed one of his many rings—
For he had many, poor worm—and thought,
It is his mother's hair.

IX

Who knows if he be dead?
Whether I need have fled?
Am I guilty of blood?
However this may be,
Comfort her, comfort her, all things good,
While I am over the sea!
Let me and my passionate love go by,
But speak to her all things holy and high,
Whatever happen to me!
Me and my harmful love go by;
But come to her waking, find her asleep,
Powers of the height, Powers of the deep,
And comfort her tho' I die!

III

Courage, poor heart of stone!
I will not ask thee why
Thou canst not understand
That thou art left for ever alone;
Courage, poor stupid heart of stone!—
Or if I ask thee why,
Care not thou to reply:
She is but dead, and the time is at hand
When thou shalt more than die.

IV

I

O that 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again!

II

When I was wont to meet her
In the silent woody places
By the home that gave me birth,
We stood tranced in long embraces
Mixt with kisses sweeter, sweeter
Than anything on earth.

III

A shadow flits before me,
Not thou, but like to thee.
Ah Christ, that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be!

IV

It leads me forth at evening,
It lightly winds and steals
In a cold white robe before me,

MAUD

When all my spirit reels
At the shouts, the leagues of lights,
And the roaring of the wheels.

V

Half the night I waste in sighs,
Half in dreams I sorrow after
The delight of early skies;
In a wakeful doze I sorrow
For the hand, the lips, the eyes,
For the meeting of the morrow,
The delight of happy laughter,
The delight of low replies.

VI

'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
And a dewy splendour falls
On the little flower that clings
To the turrets and the walls;
'Tis a morning pure and sweet,
And the light and shadow fleet.
She is walking in the meadow,
And the woodland echo rings;
In a moment we shall meet.
She is singing in the meadow,
And the rivulet at her feet
Ripples on in light and shadow
To the ballad that she sings.

VII

Do I hear her sing as of old,
My bird with the shining head,
My own dove with the tender eye?
But there rings on a sudden a passionate cry,
There is someone dying or dead,
And a sullen thunder is roll'd;
For a tumult shakes the city,
And I wake, my dream is fled.
In the shuddering dawn, behold,
Without knowledge, without pity,
By the curtains of my bed
That abiding phantom cold!

VIII

Get thee hence, nor come again,
Mix not memory with doubt,
Pass, thou deathlike type of pain,
Pass, and cease to move about!
'Tis the blot upon the brain
That *will* show itself without.

IX

Then I rise, the eave-drops fall,
And the yellow vapours choke
The great city sounding wide;
The day comes, a dull red ball
Wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke
On the misty river-tide.

X

Thro' the hubbub of the market
I steal, a wasted frame;
It crosses here, it crosses there,
Thro' all the crowd confused and loud,
The shadow still the same;
And on my heavy eyelids
My anguish hangs like shame.

XI

Alas for her that met me,
That heard me softly call,
Came glimmering thro' the laurels
At the quiet evenfall,
In the garden by the turrets
Of the old manorial hall!

XII

Would the happy spirit descend
From the realms of light and song,
In the chamber or the street,
As she looks among the blest,

MAUD

Should I fear to greet my friend
Or to say 'Forgive the wrong,'
Or to ask her, 'Take me, sweet,
To the regions of thy rest'?

XIII

But the broad light glares and beats,
And the shadow flits and fleets
And will not let me be;
And I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets,
Hearts with no love for me.
Always I long to creep
Into some still cavern deep,
There to weep, and weep, and weep
My whole soul out to thee.

V

I

Dead, long dead,
Long dead!
And my heart is a handful of dust,
And the wheels go over my head,
And my bones are shaken with pain,
For in a shallow grave they are thrust,
Only a yard beneath the street,
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
The hoofs of the horses beat,
Beat into my scalp and my brain,
With never an end to the stream of passing feet,
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,
Clamour and rumble, and ringing and clatter;
And here beneath it is all as bad,
For I thought the dead had peace, but it is not; o
To have no peace in the grave, is that not sad?
But up and down and to and fro,
Ever about me the dead men go;
And then to hear a dead man chatter
Is enough to drive one mad.

II

Wretchedest age, since Time began,
They cannot even bury a man;
And tho' we paid our tithes in the days that are gone,
Not a bell was rung, not a prayer was read.
It is that which makes us loud in the world of the dead;
There is none that does his work, not one.
A touch of their office might have sufficed,
But the churchmen fain would kill their church,
As the churches have kill'd their Christ.

III

See, there is one of us sobbing,
No limit to his distress;
And another, a lord of all things, praying
To his own great self, as I guess;
And another, a statesman there, betraying
His party-secret, fool, to the press;
And yonder a vile physician, blabbing
The case of his patient—all for what?
To tickle the maggot born in an empty head,
And wheedle a world that loves him not,
For it is but a world of the dead.

IV

Nothing but idiot gabble!
For the prophecy given of old
And then not understood,
Has come to pass as foretold;
Not let any man think for the public good,
But babble, merely for babble.
For I never whisper'd a private affair
Within the hearing of cat or mouse,
No, not to myself in the closet alone,
But I heard it shouted at once from the top of the house;
Everything came to be known.
Who told *him* we were there?

V

Not that gray old wolf, for he came not back
From the wilderness, full of wolves, where he used to lie;

He has gather'd the bones for his o'ergrown whelp to crack—
Crack them now for yourself, and howl, and die.

VI

Prophet, curse me the blabbing lip,
And curse me the British vermin, the rat;
I know not whether he came in the Hanover ship,
But I know that he lies and listens mute
In an ancient mansion's crannies and holes.
Arsenic, arsenic, sure, would do it,
Except that now we poison our babes, pour souls!
It is all used up for that.

VII

Tell him now: she is standing here at my head;
Not beautiful now, not even kind;
He may take her now; for she never speaks her mind,
But is ever the one thing silent here.
She is not *of* us, as I divine,
She comes from another stiller world of the dead,
Stiller, not fairer than mine.

VIII

But I know where a garden grows,
Fairer than aught in the world beside,
All made up of the lily and rose
That blow by night when the season is good,
To the sound of dancing music and flutes:
It is only flowers, they had no fruits,
And I almost fear they are not roses, but blood;
For the keeper was one, so full of pride,
He linkt a dead man there to a spectral bride;
For he, if he had not been a Sultan of brutes,
Would he have that hole in his side?

IX

But what will the old man say?
He laid a cruel snare in a pit
To catch a friend of mine one stormy day;
Yet now I could even weep to think of it;

For what will the old man say
When he comes to the second corpse in the pit?

X

Friend, to be struck by the public foe,
Then to strike him and lay him low,
That were a public merit, far,
Whatever the Quaker holds, from sin;
But the red life spilt for a private blow—
I swear to you, lawful and lawless war
Are scarcely even akin.

XI

O me, why have they not buried me deep enough?
Is it kind to have made me a grave so rough,
Me, that was never a quiet sleeper?
Maybe still I am but half-dead;
Then I cannot be wholly dumb.
I will cry to the steps above my head
And somebody, surely, some kind heart will come
To bury me, bury me
Deeper, ever so little deeper.

PART III

I

MY LIFE has crept so long on a broken wing
Thro' cells of madness, haunts of horror and fear,
That I come to be grateful at last for a little thing.
My mood is changed, for it fell at a time of year
When the face of night is fair on the dewy downs,
And the shining daffodil dies, and the Charioteer
And starry Gemini hang like glorious crowns
Over Orion's grave low down in the west,
That like a silent lightning under the stars
She seem'd to divide in a dream from a band of the blest,
And spoke of a hope for the world in the coming wars—
'And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble have rest,
Knowing I tarry for thee,' and pointed to Mars
As he glow'd like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast.

II

And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a dear delight
 To have look'd, tho' but in a dream, upon eyes so fair,
 That had been in a weary world my one thing bright;
 And it was but a dream, yet it lighten'd my despair
 When I thought that a war would arise in defence of the right,
 That an iron tyranny now should bend or cease,
 The glory of manhood stand on his ancient height,
 Nor Britain's one sole God be the millionaire.
 No more shall commerce be all in all, and Peace
 Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note,
 And watch her harvest ripen, her herd increase,
 Nor the cannon-bullet rust on a slothful shore,
 And the cobweb woven across the cannon's throat
 Shall make its threaded tears in the wind no more.

III

And as months ran on and rumour of battle grew,
 'It is time, it is time, O passionate heart,' said I—
 For I cleaved to a cause that I felt to be pure and true—
 'It is time, O passionate heart and morbid eye,
 That old hysterical mock-disease should die.'
 And I stood on a giant deck and mixt my breath
 With a loyal people shouting a battle-cry,
 Till I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly
 Far into the North, and battle, and seas of death.

IV

Let it go or stay, so I wake to the higher aims
 Of a land that has lost for a little her lust of gold,
 And love of a peace that was full of wrongs and shames,
 Horrible, hateful, monstrous, not to be told;
 And hail once more to the banner of battle unroll'd!
 Tho' many a light shall darken, and many shall weep
 For those that are crush'd in the clash of jarring claims,
 Yet God's just wrath shall be wreak'd on a giant liar,
 And many a darkness into the light shall leap,
 And shine in the sudden making of splendid names,
 And noble thought be freer under the sun,
 And the heart of the people beat with one desire;

For the peace, that I deem'd no peace, is over and done,
And now by the side of the Black and the Baltic deep,
And deathful-grinning mouths of the fortress, flames
The blood-red blossom of war with a heart of fire.

V

Let it flame or fade, and the war roll down like a wind,
We have proved we have hearts in a cause, we are noble still,
And myself have awaked, as it seems, to the better mind.
It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill;
I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind,
I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assign'd.

PART III

IDYLLS ON CLASSICAL THEMES

THE LOTOS-EATERS

'COURAGE!' he said, and pointed toward the land,
'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.'
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd; and dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seem'd the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against the rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave

To each, but whoso did receive of them
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and the moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, 'We will return no more;'
And all at once they sang, 'Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam.'

1833

CHORIC SONG

THERE is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,

Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
 Nor ever fold our wings,
 And cease from wanderings,
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
 Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
 'There is no joy but calm!'
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
 The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
 With winds upon the branch, and there
 Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
 Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
 Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
 Falls, and floats adown the air.
 Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
 The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
 Drops in a silent autumn night.
 All its allotted length of days
 The flower ripens in its place,
 Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
 Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
 Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
 Death is the end of life; ah, why
 Should life all labour be?
 Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
 And in a little while our lips are dumb.
 Let us alone. What is it that will last?
 All things are taken from us, and become
 Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
 Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
 To war with evil? Is there any peace
 In ever climbing up a climbing wave?
 All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
 In silence—ripen, fall, and cease:
 Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change:
For surely now our household hearths are cold,
Our sons inherit us, our looks are strange,
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There is confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath,
Sore tasks to hearts worn out by many wars,
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII

But, propt on beds of amaranth moly,
How sweet—while warm air lulls us, blowing lowly—

With half-dropt eyelid still,
 Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
 To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
 His waters from the purple hill—
 To hear the dewy echoes calling
 From cave to cave thro' thick-twined vine—
 To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
 Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
 Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
 Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak,
 The Lotos blows by every winding creek;
 All day the wind breathes low with mellow tone;
 Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
 Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotus-dust is
 blown.

We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
 Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was
 seething free,
 Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-mountains in the
 sea.

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
 In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
 On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
 For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
 Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
 Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;
 Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
 Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and
 fiery sands,
 Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and pray-
 ing hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
 Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
 Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
 Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
 Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
 Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
 Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—down in
 hell

Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
 Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
 O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

1833

DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE

(*In Enna*)

FAINT as a climate-changing bird that flies
 All night across the darkness, and at dawn
 Falls on the threshold of her native land,
 And can no more thou camest, O my child,
 Led upward by the God of ghosts and dreams,
 Who laid thee at Eleusis, dazed and dumb
 With passing thro' at once from state to state,
 Until I brought thee hither, that the day,
 When here thy hands let fall the gather'd flower,
 Might break thro' clouded memories once again
 On thy lost self. A sudden nightingale
 Saw thee, and flash'd into a frolic song
 And welcome; and a gleam as of the moon,
 When first she peers along the tremulous deep,
 Fled wavering o'er thy face, and chased away
 That shadow of a likeness to the king
 Of shadows, thy dark mate, Persephone!
 Queen of the dead no more—my child! Thine eyes
 Again were human-godlike, and the sun
 Burst from a swimming fleece of winter gray,
 And robed thee in his day from head to feet—
 'Mother!' and I was folded in thine arms.

Child, those imperial, disimpassion'd eyes
 Awed even me at first, thy mother—eyes
 That oft had seen the serpent-wanded power
 Draw downward into Hades with his drift
 Of flickering spectres, lighted from below
 By the red race of fiery Phlegethon;

But when before have Gods or men beheld
 The Life that had descended re-arise,
 And lighted from above him by the Sun?
 So mighty was the mother's childless cry,
 A cry that rang thro' Hades, Earth, and Heaven!

So in this pleasant vale we stand again,
 The field of Enna, now once more ablaze
 With flowers that brighten as thy footstep falls,
 All flowers—but for one black blur of earth
 Left by that closing chasm, thro' which the car
 Of dark Aidoneus rising rapt thee hence.
 And here, my child, tho' folded in thine arms,
 I feel the deathless heart of motherhood
 Within me shudder, lest the naked glebe
 Should yawn once more into the gulf, and thence
 The shrilly whinnings of the team of Hell,
 Ascending, pierce the glad and songful air,
 And all at once their arch'd necks, midnight-maned,
 Jet upward thro' the midday blossom. No!
 For, see, thy foot has touch'd it; all the space
 Of blank earth-baldness clothes itself afresh,
 And breaks into the crocus-purple hour
 That saw thee vanish.

Child, when thou wert gone,
 I envied human wives, and nested birds,
 Yea, the cubb'd lioness; went in search of thee
 Thro' many a palace, many a cot, and gave
 Thy breast to ailing infants in the night,
 And set the mother waking in amaze
 To find her sick one whole; and forth again
 Among the wail of midnight winds, and cried,
 'Where is my loved one? Wherefore do ye wail?'
 And out from all the night an answer shrill'd,
 'We know not, and we know not why we wail.'
 I climb'd on all the cliffs of all the seas,
 And ask'd the waves that moan about the world,
 'Where? do ye make your moaning for my child?'
 And round from all the world the voices came,
 'We know not, and we know not why we moan.'
 'Where?' and I stared from every eagle-peak,

I thridded the black heart of all the woods,
 I peer'd thro' tomb and cave, and in the storms
 Of autumn swept across the city, and heard
 The murmur of their temples chanting me,
 Me, me, the desolate Mother! 'Where?'—and turn'd,
 And fled by many a waste, forlorn of man,
 And grieved for man thro' all my grief for thee,—
 The jungle rooted in his shatter'd hearth,
 The serpent coil'd about his broken shaft,
 The scorpion crawling over naked skulls;—
 I saw the tiger in the ruin'd fane
 Spring from his fallen God, but trace of thee
 I saw not; and far on, and, following out
 A league of labyrinthine darkness, came
 On three gray heads beneath a gleaming rift.
 'Where?' and I heard one voice from all the three,
 'We know not, for we spin the lives of men,
 And not of Gods, and know not why we spin!
 There is a Fate beyond us.' Nothing knew.

Last as the likeness of a dying man,
 Without his knowledge, from him flits to warn
 A far-off friendship that he comes no more,
 So he, the God of dreams, who heard my cry,
 Drew from thyself the likeness of thyself
 Without thy knowledge, and thy shadow past
 Before me, crying, 'The Bright one in the highest
 Is brother of the Dark one in the lowest,
 And Bright and Dark have sworn that I, the child
 Of thee, the great Earth-Mother, thee, the Power
 That lifts her buried life from gloom to bloom,
 Should be for ever and for evermore
 The Bride of Darkness.'

So the Shadow wail'd.
 Then I, Earth-Goddess, cursed the Gods of heaven.
 I would not mingle with their feasts; to me
 Their nectar smack'd of hemlock on the lips,
 Their rich ambrosia tasted aconite.
 The man, that only lives and loves an hour,
 Seem'd nobler than their hard eternities.
 My quick tears kill'd the flower, my ravings hush'd

The bird, and lost in utter grief I fail'd
 To send my life thro' olive-yard and vine
 And golden-grain, my gift to helpless man.
 Rain-rotten died the wheat, the barley-spears
 Were hollow-husk'd, the leaf fell, and the Sun,
 Pale at my grief, drew down before his time
 Sickening, and Ætna kept her winter snow.

Then He, the brother of this Darkness, He
 Who still is highest, glancing from his height
 On earth a fruitless fallow, when he miss'd
 The wonted steam of sacrifice, the praise
 And prayer of men, decreed that thou shouldst dwell
 For nine white moons of each whole year with me,
 Three dark ones in the shadow with thy king.

Once more the reaper in the gleam of dawn
 Will see me by the landmark far away,
 Blessing his field, or seated in the dusk
 Of even, by the lonely threshing-floor,
 Rejoicing in the harvest and the grange.

Yet I, Earth-Goddess, am but ill-content
 With them who still are highest. Those gray heads,
 What meant they by their 'Fate beyond the Fates'
 But younger kindlier Gods to bear us down,
 As we bore down the Gods before us? Gods,
 To quench, not hurl the thunderbolt, to stay,
 Not spread the plague, the famine; Gods indeed,
 To the send the noon into the night and break
 The sunless halls of Hades into Heaven?
 Till thy dark lord accept and love the Sun,
 And all the Shadow die into the Light,
 When thou shalt dwell the whole bright year with me,
 And souls of men, who grew beyond their race,
 And made themselves as Gods against the fear
 Of Death and Hell; and thou that hast from men,
 As Queen of Death, that worship which is Fear,
 Henceforth, as having risen from out of the dead,
 Shalt ever send thy life along with mine
 From buried grain thro' springing blade, and bless
 Their garner'd autumn also, reap with me,

Earth-Mother, in the harvest hymns of Earth
 The worship which is Love, and see no more
 The Stone, the Wheel, the dimly-glimmering lawns
 Of that Elysium, all the hateful fires
 Of torment, and the shadowy warrior glide
 Along the silent field of Asphodel.

1889

ULYSSES

IT LITTLE PROFITS that an idle king,
 By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
 Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
 Unequal laws unto a savage race,
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
 I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
 Life to the lees. All times I have enjoy'd
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
 That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
 Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
 Vext the dim sea. I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known—cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments,
 Myself not least, but honour'd of them all—
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
 For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
 As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me
 Little remains; but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more,
 A bringer of new things; and vile it were
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself,

And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
The gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil.
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends.
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

TIRESIAS

I WISH I were as in the years of old,
While yet the blessed daylight made itself
Ruddy thro' both the roofs of sight, and woke
These eyes, now dull, but then so keen to seek
The meanings ambush'd under all they saw,
The flight of birds, the flame of sacrifice,
What omens may foreshadow fate to man
And woman, and the secret of the Gods.

My son, the Gods, despite of human prayer,
Are slower to forgive than human kings.
The great God Arês burns in anger still
Against the guiltless heirs of him from Tyre,
Our Cadmus, out of whom thou art, who found
Beside the springs of Dircê, smote, and still'd
Thro' all its folds the multitudinous beast,
The dragon, which our trembling fathers call'd
The God's own son.

A tale, that told to me,
When but thine age, by age as winter-white
As mine is now, amazed, but made me yearn
For larger glimpses of that more than man
Which rolls the heavens, and lifts and lays the deep,
Yet loves and hates with mortal hates and loves,
And moves unseen among the ways of men.

Then, in my wanderings all the lands that lie
Subjected to the Heliconian ridge
Have heard this footstep fall, altho' my wont
Was more to scale the highest of the heights
With some strange hope to see the nearer God.

One naked peak—the sister of the sun
Would climb from out the dark, and linger there
To silver all the valleys with her shafts—
There once, but long ago, five-fold thy term
Of years, I lay; the winds were dead for heat;
The noonday crag made the hand burn; and sick
For shadow—not one bush was near—I rose,

Following a torrent till its myriad falls
Found silence in the hollows underneath.

There in a secret olive-glade I saw
Pallas Athene climbing from the bath
In anger; yet one glittering foot disturb'd
The lucid well; one snowy knee was prest
Against the margin flowers; a dreadful light
Came from her golden hair, her golden helm
And all her golden armour on the grass,
And from her virgin breast, and virgin eyes
Remaining fixt on mine, till mine grew dark
Forever, and I heard a voice that said,
'Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen too much,
And speak the truth that no man may believe.'

Son, in the hidden world of sight that lives
Behind this darkness, I behold her still,
Beyond all work of those who carve the stone,
Beyond all dreams of Godlike womanhood,
Ineffable beauty, out of whom, at a glance,
And as it were, perforce, upon me flash'd
The power of prophesying—but to me
No power—so chain'd and coupled with the curse
Of blindness and their unbelief, who heard
And heard not when I spake of famine, plague,
Shrine-shattering earthquake, fire, flood, thunderbolt,
And angers of the Gods for evil done
And expiation lack'd—no power on Fate,
Theirs, or mine own! for when the crowd would roar
For blood, for war, whose issue was their doom,
To cast wise words among the multitude
Was flinging fruit to lions; nor, in hours
Of civil outbreak, when I knew the twain
Would each waste each, and bring on both the yoke
Of stronger states, was mine the voice to curb
The madness of our cities and their kings.

Who ever turn'd upon his heel to hear
My warning that the tyranny of one
Was prelude to the tyranny of all?
My counsel that the tyranny of all
Led backward to the tyranny of one?

This power hath work'd no good to aught that lives,
And these blind hands were useless in their wars.
O therefore that the unfulfill'd desire,

The grief for ever born from griefs to be,
The boundless yearning of the Prophet's heart—
Could *that* stand forth, and like a statue, rear'd
To some great citizen, win all praise from all
Who past it, saying, 'That was he!'

In vain!

Virtue must shape itself in deed, and those
Whom weakness or necessity have cramp'd
Within themselves, immersing, each, his urn
In his own well, draw solace as he may.

Menœceus, thou hast eyes, and I can hear
Too plainly what full tides of onset sap
Our seven high gates, and what a weight of war
Rides on those ringing axles! jingle of bits,
Shouts, arrows, tramp of the horn-footed horse
That grind the glebe to powder! Stony showers
Of that ear-stunning hail of Arês crash
Along the sounding walls. Above, below,
Shock after shock, the song-built towers and gates
Reel, bruised and butted with the shuddering
War-thunder of iron rams; and from within
The city comes a murmur void of joy,
Lest she be taken captive—maidens, wives,
And mothers with their babblers of the dawn,
And oldest age in shadow from the night,
Falling about their shrines before their Gods,
And wailing, 'Save us.'

And they wail to thee!

These eyeless eyes, that cannot see thine own,
See this, that only in thy virtue lies
The saving of our Thebes; for, yesternight,
To me, the great God Arês, whose one bliss
Is war and human sacrifice—himself
Blood-red from battle, spear and helmet tipt
With stormy light as on a mast at sea,
Stood out before a darkness, crying, 'Thebes,
Thy Thebes shall fall and perish, for I loathe
The seed of Cadmus—yet if one of these
By his own hand—if one of these—'

My son,

No sound is breathed so potent to coerce,
And to conciliate, as their names who dare
For that sweet mother land which gave them birth

Nobly to do, nobly to die. Their names,
 Graven on memorial columns, are a song
 Heard in the future; few, but more than wall
 And rampart, their examples reach a hand
 Far thro' all years, and everywhere they meet
 And kindle generous purpose, and the strength
 To mould it into action pure as theirs.

Fairer thy fate than mine, if life's best end
 Be to end well! and thou refusing this,
 Unvenerable will thy memory be
 While men shall move the lips; but if thou dare—
 Thou, one of these, the race of Cadmus—then
 No stone is fitted in yon marble girth
 Whose echo shall not tongue thy glorious doom,
 Nor in this pavement but shall ring thy name
 To every hoof that clangs it, and the springs
 Of Dircê laving yonder battle-plain,
 Heard from the roofs by night, will murmur thee
 To thine own Thebes, while Thebes thro' thee shall stand
 Firm-based with all her Gods.

The Dragon's cave

Half hid, they tell me, now in flowing vines—
 Where once he dwelt and whence he roll'd himself
 At dead of night—thou knowest, and that smooth rock
 Before it, altar-fashion'd, where of late
 The woman-breasted Sphinx, with wings drawn back,
 Folded her lion paws, and look'd to Thebes.
 There blanch the bones of whom she slew, and these
 Mixt with her own, because the fierce beast found
 A wiser than herself, and dash'd herself
 Dead in her rage; but thou art wise enough,
 Tho' young, to love thy wiser, blunt the curse
 Of Pallas, hear, and tho' I speak the truth
 Believe I speak it, let thine own hand strike
 Thy youthful pulses into rest and quench
 The red God's anger, fearing not to plunge
 Thy torch of life in darkness, rather—thou
 Rejoicing that the sun, the moon, the stars
 Send no such light upon the ways of men
 As one great deed.

Thither, my son, and there
 Thou, that hast never known the embrace of love,
 Offer thy maiden life.

This useless hand!
I felt one warm tear fall upon it. Gone!
He will achieve his greatness.

But for me,
I would that I were gather'd to my rest,
And mingled with the famous kings of old,
On whom about their ocean-islets flash
The faces of the Gods—the wise man's word,
Here trampled by the populace underfoot,
Then crown'd with worship—and these eyes will find
The men I knew, and watch the chariot whirl
About the goal again, and hunters race
The shadowy lion, and the warrior-kings,
In height and prowess more than human, strive
Again for glory, while the golden lyre
Is ever sounding in heroic ears
Heroic hymns, and every way the vales
Wind, clouded with the grateful incense fume
Of those who mix all odour to the Gods
On one far height in one far-shining fire.

1885 (but written much earlier)

SONG from THE HESPERIDES

THE GOLDEN APPLE, the golden apple, the hallowed fruit,
Guard it well, guard it warily,
Singing airily,
Standing about the charmed root.
Round about all is mute,
As the snow-field on the mountain-peaks,
As the sand-field at the mountain-foot.
Crocodiles in briny creeks
Sleep and stir not: all is mute.
If ye sing not, if ye make false measure,
We shall lose eternal pleasure,
Worth eternal want of rest.
Laugh not loudly: watch the treasure
Of the wisdom of the West.

In a corner wisdom whispers. Five and three
 (Let it not be preached abroad) make an awful mystery.
 For the blossom unto threefold music bloweth;
 Evermore it is born anew;
 And the sap to threefold music floweth,
 From the root
 Drawn in the dark,
 Up to the fruit,
 Creeping under the fragrant bark,
 Liquid gold, honeysweet, thro' and thro'.
 Keen-eyed Sisters, singing airily,
 Looking warily
 Every way,
 Guard the apple night and day,
 Lest one from the East come and take it away.

II

Father Hesper, Father Hesper, watch, watch, ever and aye,
 Looking under silver hair with a silver eye.
 Father, twinkle not thy steadfast sight;
 Kingdoms lapse, and climates change, and races die;
 Honour comes with mystery;
 Hoarded wisdom brings delight.
 Number, tell them over and number
 How many the mystic fruit-tree holds,
 Lest the red-combed dragon slumber
 Rolled together in purple folds.
 Look to him, father, lest he wink, and the golden apple be stol'n
 away,
 For his ancient heart is drunk with overwatchings night and day,
 Round about the hallowed fruit-tree curled—
 Sing away, sing aloud evermore in the wind, without stop,
 Let his scaled eyelid drop,
 For he is older than the world.
 If he waken, we waken,
 Rapidly levelling eager eyes.
 If he sleep, we sleep,
 Dropping the eyelid over the eyes.
 If the golden apple be taken,
 The world will be overwise.
 Five links, a golden chain, are we,

Hesper, the dragon, and sisters three,
Bound about the golden tree.

III

Father Hesper, Father Hesper, watch, watch, night and day,
Lest the old wound of the world be healèd,
The glory unsealèd,
The golden apple stol'n away,
And the ancient secret revealèd.
Look from west to east along:
Father, old Himala weakens, Caucasus is bold and strong.
Wandering waters unto wandering waters call;
Let them clash together, foam and fall.
Out of watchings, out of wiles,
Comes the bliss of secret smiles.
All things are not told to all.
Half-round the mantling night is drawn,
Purple fringed with even and dawn.
Hesper hateth Phosphor, evening hateth morn.

IV

Every flower and every fruit the redolent breath
Of this warm sea-wind ripeneth,
Arching the billow in his sleep;
But the land-wind wandereth,
Broken by the highland-steep,
Two streams upon the violet deep;
For the western sun and the western star,
And the low west wind, breathing afar,
The end of day and beginning of night
Make the apple holy and bright;
Holy and bright, round and full, bright and blest,
Mellowed in a land of rest;
Watch it warily day and night;
All good things are in the west.
Till midnight the cool east light
Is shut out by the tall hillbrow;
But when the full-faced sunset yellowly
Stays on the flowering arch of the bough,
The luscious fruitage clustereth mellowly,

Golden-kernelled, golden-cored,
 Sunset-ripened above on the tree.
 The world is wasted with fire and sword,
 But the apple of gold hangs over the sea.
 Five links, a golden chain are we,
 Hesper, the dragon, and sisters three,
 Daughters three,
 Bound about
 All round about
 The gnarlèd bole of the charmèd tree.
 The golden apple, the golden apple, the hallowed fruit,
 Guard it well, guard it warily,
 Watch it warily,
 Singing airily,
 Standing about the charmèd root.

1833

CENONE

THERE lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
 Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
 The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
 Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
 And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
 The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
 Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
 The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
 In cataract after cataract to the sea.
 Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
 Stands up and takes the morning; but in front
 The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
 Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
 The crown of Troas.

 Hither came at noon
 Mournful Cēnone, wandering forlorn
 Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
 Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
 Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
 She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,

Sang to the stillness, till the mountain shade
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

'O mother Ida, many fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill;
The grasshopper is silent in the grass;
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flower droops, the golden bee,
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O earth, hear me, O hills, O caves
That house the cold crown'd snake! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather'd shape; for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while,
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills;
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine.
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft;
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone; white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin

Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
 Cluster'd about his temples like a God's;
 And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow brightens
 When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
 Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
 Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
 That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
 And listen'd, the full-flowing river of speech
 Came down upon my heart:

“My own Enone,
 Beautiful-brow'd Enone, my own soul,
 Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n
 'For the most fair,' would seem to award it thine,
 As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
 The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
 Of movement, and the charm of married brows.”

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
 And added, “This was cast upon the board,
 When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
 Ranged in the halls of Peleus; Whereupon
 Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due;
 But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
 Delivering, that to me, by common voice
 Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
 Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
 This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
 Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine
 Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
 Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.”

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 It was the deep midnight; one silvery cloud
 Had lost his way between the piney sides
 Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
 Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
 And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
 Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,

Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and lean'd
Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom
Coming thro' heaven, like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue
Wherewith to embellish state, "from many a vale
And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn,
Or labour'd mine undrainable of ore.
Honour," she said, "and homage, tax and toll
From many an inland town and haven large,
Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers."

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
"Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to the king-born,
A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest Gods, who have attain'd
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power

Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she stood
 Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
 O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
 Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
 The while, above, her full and earnest eye
 Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
 Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply:

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
 These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
 Yet not for power (power of herself
 Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,
 Acting the law we live by without fear;
 And, because right is right, to follow right
 Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Again she said: "I woo thee not with gifts.
 Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
 To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
 So shalt thou find me fairest.

Yet, indeed,
 If gazing on divinity disrobed
 Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
 Unbias'd by self-profit, Oh! rest thee sure
 That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
 So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
 Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
 To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
 Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
 Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
 Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
 Commensure perfect freedom."

'Here she ceas'd,
 And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, "O Paris,
 Give it to Pallas!" but he heard me not,
 Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
 Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
 Idalian Aphrodite beautiful
 Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
 With rosy slender fingers backward drew

From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder; from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whisper'd in his ear, "I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece."
She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for fear;
But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

'Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
My love hath told me so a thousand times.
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouch'd fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and thy hot lips prest
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Offruitful kisses, thick as autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois!

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster'd the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more

Shall lone Enone see the morning mist
 Sweep thro' them; never see them overlaid
 With narrow moonlit slips of silver cloud,
 Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 I wish that somewhere in the ruin'd folds,
 Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
 Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her
 The Abominable, that uninvited came
 Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,
 And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
 And bred this change; that I might speak my mind,
 And tell her to her face how much I hate
 Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
 In this green valley, under this green hill,
 Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
 Seal'd it with kisses? water'd it with tears?
 O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
 O happy heaven, how canst thou see my face?
 O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
 O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
 There are enough unhappy on this earth,
 Pass by the happy souls, that love to live;
 I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
 And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
 Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
 Weigh heavy on my eyelids; let me die.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
 I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
 Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
 Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
 Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
 Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
 My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
 Conjectures of the features of her child
 Ere it is born. Her child!—a shudder comes
 Across me: never child be born of me,
 Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire.'

1833

TITHONUS

THE WOODS DECAY, the woods decay and fall,
The vapours weep their burthen to the ground,
Man comes and tills the field and lies beneath,
And after many a summer dies the swan.
Me only cruel immortality
Consumes; I wither slowly in thine arms,
Here at the quiet limit of the world,
A white-hair'd shadow roaming like a dream
The ever-silent spaces of the East,
Far-folded mists, and gleaming halls of morn.

Alas! for this gray shadow, once a man—
So glorious in his beauty and thy choice,
Who madest him thy chosen, that he seem'd
To his great heart none other than a God!
I ask'd thee, 'Give me immortality.'
Then didst thou grant mine asking with a smile,
Like wealthy men who care not how they give.
But thy strong Hours indignant work'd their wills,
And beat me down and marr'd and wasted me,
And tho' they could not end me, left me maim'd
To dwell in presence of immortal youth,
Immortal age beside immortal youth,

And all I was, in ashes. Can thy love,
 Thy beauty, make amends, tho' even now,
 Close over us, the silver star, thy guide,
 Shines in those tremulous eyes that fill with tears
 To hear me? Let me go; take back thy gift:
 Why should a man desire in any way
 To vary from the kindly race of men,
 Or pass beyond the goal of ordinance
 Where all should pause, as is most meet for all?

A soft air fans the cloud apart; there comes
 A glimpse of that dark world where I was born.
 Once more the old mysterious glimmer steals
 From thy pure brows, and from thy shoulders pure,
 And bosom beating with a heart renew'd.
 Thy cheek begins to redden thro' the gloom,
 Thy sweet eyes brighten slowly close to mine,
 Ere yet they blind the stars, and the wild team
 Which love thee, yearning for thy yoke, arise
 And shake the darkness from their loosen'd manes,
 And beat the twilight into flakes of fire.

Lo! ever thus thou growest beautiful
 In silence, then before thine answer given
 Departest, and thy tears are on my cheek.

Why wilt thou ever scare me with thy tears,
 And make me tremble lest a saying learnt,
 In days far-off, on that dark earth, be true?
 'The Gods themselves cannot recall their gifts.'

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
 In days far-off, and with what other eyes
 I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
 The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
 The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
 Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
 Glow with the glow that slowly crimson'd all
 Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
 Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
 With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
 Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
 Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,

Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East;
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground.
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave;
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn,
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

1860

PART IV
IN MEMORIAM A. H. H..

OBITU MDCCCXXXIII

1850

STRONG Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove;

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
Thou madest Life in man and brute;
Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou.
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know,
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear:
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seem'd my sin in me,
What seem'd my worth since I began;
For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
Confusions of a wasted youth;
Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

* * * *

I

I held it truth, with him who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
And find in loss a gain to match?
Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drown'd,
Let darkness keep her raven gloss.
Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with Death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
The long result of love, and boast,
'Behold the man that loved and lost,
But all he was is overworn.'

II

Old yew, which graspest at the stones
That name the underlying dead,
Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
And bring the firstling to the flock;
And in the dusk of thee the clock
Beats out the little lives of men.

O not for thee the glow, the bloom,
Who changest not in any gale,
Nor branding summer suns avail
To touch thy thousand years of gloom;

And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
I seem to fail from out my blood
And grow incorporate into thee.

III

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
O sweet and bitter in a breath,
What whispers from thy lying lip?

'The stars,' she whispers, 'blindly run;
A web is wov'n across the sky;
From out waste places comes a cry,
And murmurs from the dying sun;

'And all the phantom, Nature, stands—
With all the music in her tone,
A hollow echo of my own—
A hollow form with empty hands.'

And shall I take a thing so blind,
Embrace her as my natural good;
Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
Upon the threshold of the mind?

IV

To Sleep I give my powers away;
My will is bondsman to the dark;
I sit within a helmless bark,
And with my heart I muse and say:

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
That thou shouldst fail from thy desire,
Who scarcely darest to inquire,
‘What is it makes me beat so low?’

Something it is which thou hast lost,
Some pleasure from thine early years.
Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
That grief hath shaken into frost!

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
All night below the darken’d eyes;
With morning wakes the will, and cries,
‘Thou shalt not be the fool of loss.’

V

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within.

But, for the unquiet heart and brain,
A use in measured language lies;
The sad mechanic exercise,
Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.

In words, like weeds, I’ll wrap me o’er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more.

VI

One writes, that 'Other friends remain,'
That 'Loss is common to the race'—
And common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more:
Too common! Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
Who pledgedst now thy gallant son,
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
Hath still'd the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
Thy sailor,—while thy head is bow'd,
His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought;

Expecting still his advent home;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, 'here to-day,'
Or 'here to-morrow will he come.'

O somewhere, meek, unconscious dove,
That sittest ranging golden hair;
And glad to find thyself so fair,
Poor child, that awaitest for thy love!

For now her father's chimney glows
In expectation of a guest;
And thinking 'this will please him best,'
She takes a riband or a rose;

For he will see them on to-night;
And with the thought her colour burns;
And, having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right;

And, even when she turn'd, the curse
Had fallen, and her future lord
Was drown'd in passing thro' the ford,
Or kill'd in falling from his horse.

O what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?
To her, perpetual maidenhood,
And unto me, no second friend.

VII

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp'd no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

VIII

A happy lover who has come
To look on her that love him well,
Who 'lights and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home;

He saddens, all the magic light
Dies off at once from bower and hall,
And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight:

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

So find I every pleasant spot
In which we two were wont to meet,
The field, the chamber, and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there
In those deserted walks, may find
A flower beat with rain and wind,
Which once she foster'd up with care;

So seems it in my deep regret,
O my forsaken heart, with thee
And this poor flower of poesy
Which, little cared for, fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanish'd eye,
I go to plant it on his tomb,
That if it can it there may bloom,
Or dying, there at least may die.

IX

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore
Saillest the placid ocean-plains
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
In vain; a favourable speed
Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead
Thro' prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright
As our pure love, thro' early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

X

I hear the noise about thy keel;
I hear the bell struck in the night;
I see the cabin-window bright;
I see the sailor at the wheel.

Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,
And travell'd men from foreign lands;
And letters unto trembling hands;
And, thy dark freight, a vanish'd life.

So bring him; we have idle dreams;
This look of quiet flatters thus
Our home-bred fancies. O to us,
The fools of habit sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,
That takes the sunshine and the rains,
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God;

Than if with thee the roaring wells
Shall gulf him fathom-deep in brine,
And hands so often clasp'd in mine,
Should toss with tangle and with shells.

XI

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground;

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold;

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main;

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall,
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair;

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,
And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in the noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

XII

Lo, as a dove when up she springs
To bear thro' heaven a tale of woe,
So dolorous message knit below
The wild pulsation of her wings;

Like her I go; I cannot stay;
I leave this mortal ark behind,
A weight of nerves without a mind,
And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,
And reach the glow of southern skies,
And see the sails at distance rise,
And linger weeping on the marge,

And saying, 'Comes he thus, my friend?
Is this the end of all my care?
And circle moaning in the air:
'Is this the end? Is this the end?'

And forward dart again, and play
About the prow, and back return
To where the body sits, and learn
That I have been an hour away.

XIII

Tears of the widower, when he sees
A late-lost form that sleep reveals,
And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
Her place is empty, fall like these;

Which weep a loss for ever new,
A void where heart on heart reposed;
And where warm hands have prest and closed,
Silence, till I be silent too;

Which weep the comrade of my choice,
An awful thought, a life removed,
The human-hearted man I loved,
A Spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come Time, and teach me, many years,
I do not suffer in a dream;
For now so strange do these things seem,
Mine eyes have leisure for their tears,

My fancies time to rise on wing,
And glance about the approaching sails,
As tho' they brought but merchants' bales,
And not the burthen that they bring.

XIV

If one should bring me this report,
That thou hadst touch'd the land to-day
And I went down unto the quay,
And found thee lying in the port;

And standing, muffled round with woe,
Should see thy passengers in rank
Come stepping lightly down the plank,
And beckoning unto those they know;

And if along with these should come
The man I held as half-divine,
Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
And ask a thousand things of home;

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

And I should tell him all my pain,
And how my life had droop'd of late,
And he should sorrow o'er my state
And marvel what possess'd my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,
No hint of death in all his frame,
But found him all in all the same,
I should not feel it to be strange.

XV

To-night the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day;
The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest crack'd, the waters curl'd,
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dash'd on tower and tree,
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver
That all thy motions gently pass
Athwart a plane of molten glass,
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
And but for fear it is not so,
The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
And onward drags a labouring breast,
And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

XVI

What words are these have fall'n from me?
Can calm despair and wild unrest
Be tenants of a single breast,
Or Sorrow such a changeling be?

Or doth she only seem to take
The touch of change in calm or storm,
But knows no more of transient form
In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of the lark
Hung in the shadow of a heaven?
Or has the shock, so harshly given,
Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
And staggers blindly ere she sink?
And stunn'd me from my power to think
And all my knowledge of myself;

And made me that delirious man
Whose fancy fuses old and new,
And flashes into false and true,
And mingles all without a plan?

xvii

Thou comest, much wept for; such a breeze
Compell'd thy canvas, and my prayer
Was as the whisper of an air
To breathe thee over lonely seas.

For I in spirit saw thee move
Thro' circles of the bounding sky,
Week after week; the days go by;
Come quick, thou bringest all I love.

Henceforth, wherever thou mayst roam,
My blessing like a line of light,
Is on the waters day and night,
And like a beacon guards thee home.

So may whatever tempest mars
Mid-ocean, spare thee, sacred bark,
And balmy drops in summer dark
Slide from the bosom of the stars;

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

So kind an office hath been done,
Such precious relics brought by thee,
The dust of him I shall not see
Till all my widow'd race be run.

XVIII

'Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand
Where he in English earth is laid,
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land.

'Tis little; but it looks in truth
As if the quiet bones were blest
Among familiar names to rest
And in the places of his youth.

Come then, pure hands, and bear the head
That sleeps or wears the mask of sleep,
And come, whatever loves to weep,
And hear the ritual of the dead.

Ah yet, ev'n yet, if this might be,
I, falling on his faithful heart,
Would breathing thro' his lips impart
The life that almost dies in me;

That dies not, but endures with pain,
And slowly forms the firmer mind,
Treasuring the look it cannot find,
The words that are not heard again.

XIX

The Danube to the Severn gave
The darken'd heart that beat no more;
They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hush'd nor moved along,
And hush'd my deepest grief of all,
When fill'd with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls;
My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.

XX

The lesser gricfs that may be said,
That breathe a thousand tender vows,
Are but as servants in a house
Where lies the master newly dead;

Who speak their feeling as it is,
And weep the fulness from the mind.
'It will be hard,' they say, 'to find
Another service such as this.'

My lighter moods are like to these,
That out of words a comfort win;
But there are other gricfs within,
And tears that at their fountain freeze;

For by the hearth the children sit
Cold in that atmosphere of death,
And scarce endure to draw the breath,
Or like to noiseless phantoms flit;

But open converse is there none,
So much the vital spirits sink
To see the vacant chair, and think,
'How good! how kind! and he is gone.'

XXI

I sing to him that rests below,
And, since the grasses round me wave,
I take the grasses of the grave,
And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveller hears me now and then,
And sometimes harshly will he speak:
‘This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men.’

Another answers: ‘Let him be,
He loves to make parade of pain,
That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy.’

A third is wroth: ‘Is this an hour
For private sorrow’s barren song,
When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?

‘A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?’

Behold, ye speak an idle thing;
Ye never knew the sacred dust.
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing;

And one is glad; her note is gay,
For now her little ones have ranged;
And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stol’n away.

XXII

The path by which we twain did go,
Which led by tracts that pleased us well,
Thro’ four sweet years arose and fell,
From flower to flower, from snow to snow;

And we with singing cheer’d the way,
And, crown’d with all the season lent,
From April on to April went,
And glad at heart from May to May.

But where the path we walk'd began
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,
As we descended following Hope,
There sat the Shadow fear'd of man;

Who broke our fair companionship,
And spread his mantle dark and cold,
And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
Nor follow, tho' I walk in haste,
And think that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me.

XXIII

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
Or breaking into song by fits,
Alone, alone, to where he sits,
The Shadow cloak'd from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
I wander, often falling lame,
And looking back to whence I came,
Or on to where the pathway leads;

And crying, How changed from where it ran
Thro' lands where not a leaf was dumb,
But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan;

When each by turns was guide to each,
And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,
And all was good that Time could bring,
And all the secret of the Spring
Moved in the chambers of the blood;

And many an old philosophy
On Argive heights divinely sang,
And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady.

XXIV

And was the day of my delight
As pure and perfect as I say?
The very source and fount of day
Is dash'd with wandering isles of night.

If all was good and fair we met,
This earth had been the Paradise
It never look'd to human eyes
Since our first sun arose and set.

And is it that the haze of grief
Makes former gladness loom so great?
The lowness of the present state,
That sets the past in this relief?

Or that the past will always win
A glory from it being far,
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not when we moved therein?

XXV

I know that this was Life,—the track
Whereon with equal feet we fared;
And then, as now, the day prepared
The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move
As light as carrier-birds in air;
I loved the weight I had to bear,
Because it needed help of Love;

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
When mighty Love would cleave in twain
The lading of a single pain,
And part it, giving half to him.

XXVI

Still onward winds the dreary way;
I with it; for I long to prove
No lapse of moons can canker Love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
And goodness, and hath power to see
Within the green the moulder'd tree,
And towers fallen as soon as built—

Oh if indeed that eye foresee
Or see—in Him is no before—
In more of life true life no more
And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn
Breaks hither over Indian seas,
That Shadow waiting with the keys,
To shroud me from my proper scorn.

XXVII

I envy not in any moods
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,
Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

XXVIII

The time draws near the birth of Christ.

The moon is hid, the night is still;

The Christmas bells from hill to hill

Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,

From far and near, on mead and moor,

Swell out and fail, as if a door

Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,

That now dilate, and now decrease,

Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,

Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,

I almost wish'd no more to wake,

And that my hold on life would break

Before I heard those bells again;

But they my troubled spirit rule,

For they controll'd me when a boy;

They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,

The merry merry bells of Yule.

XXIX

With such compelling cause to grieve

As daily vexes household peace,

And chains regret to his decease,

How dare we keep our Christmas-eve,

Which brings no more a welcome guest

To enrich the threshold of the night

With shower'd largess of delight

In dance and song and game and jest?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs

Entwine the cold baptismal font,

Make one wreath more for Use and Wont,

That guard the portals of the house;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
Gray nurses, loving nothing new;
Why should they miss their yearly due
Before their time? They too will die.

XXX

With trembling fingers did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
We gambol'd, making vain pretence
Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech;
We heard them sweep the winter land;
And in a circle hand-in-hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang;
We sung, tho' every eye was dim,
A merry song we sang with him
Last year: impetuously we sang.

We ceased: a gentler feeling crept
Upon us: surely rest is meet:
'They rest,' we said, 'their sleep is sweet,'
And silence follow'd, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;
Once more we sang: 'They do not die
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change;

'Rapt from the fickle and the frail
With gather'd power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil.'

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

XXXI

When Lazarus left his charnel-cave
And home to Mary's house return'd,
Was this demanded—if he yearn'd
To hear her weeping by his grave?

'Where wert thou, brother, those four days?'
There lives no record of reply,
Which telling what it is to die
Had surely added praise to praise.

From every house the neighbours met,
The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,
A solemn gladness even crown'd
The purple brows of Olivet.

Behold a man raised up by Christ!
The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
He told it not, or something seal'd
The lips of that Evangelist.

XXXII

Her eyes are homes of silent prayer,
Nor other thought her mind admits
But, he was dead, and there he sits,
And he that brought him back is there.

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother's face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.

All subtle thought, all curious fears,
Borne down by gladness so complete,
She bows, she bathes the Saviour's feet
With costly spikenard and with tears.

Thrice blest whose lives are faithful prayers,
Whose loves in higher love endure;
What souls possess themselves so pure,
Or is there blessedness like theirs?

XXXIII

O thou that after toil and storm
Mayst seem to have reach'd a purer air,
Whose faith has centre everywhere,
Nor cares to fix itself to form,

Leave thou thy sister when she prays
Her early heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadow'd hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.

Her faith thro' form is pure as thine,
Her hands are quicker unto good.
Oh, sacred be the flesh and blood
To which she links a truth divine!

See thou, that countest reason ripe
In holding by the law within,
Thou fail not in a world of sin,
And ev'n for want of such a type.

XXXIV

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live for evermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
In some wild poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness and to cease.

XXXV

Yet if some voice that man could trust
Should murmur from the narrow house,
'The cheeks drop in, the body bows;
Man dies, nor is there hope in dust;'

Might I not say? 'Yet even here,
But for one hour, O Love, I strive
To keep so sweet a thing alive.'
But I should turn mine ears and hear

The moanings of the homeless sea,
The sound of streams that swift or slow
Draw down Æonian hills, and sow
The dust of continents to be;

And Love would answer with a sigh,
'The sound of that forgetful shore
Will change my sweetness more and more,
Half-dead to know that I shall die.'

O me, what profits it to put
An idle case? If Death were seen
At first as Death, Love had not been,
Or been in narrowest working shut,

Mere fellowship of sluggish moods,
Or in his coarsest Satyr-shape
Had bruised the herb and crush'd the grape,
And bask'd and batten'd in the woods.

XXXVI

Tho' truths in manhood darkly join,
Deep-seated in our mystic frame,
We yield all blessing to the name
Of Him that made them current coin;

For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lonely doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought;

Which he may read that binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef.

XXXVII

Urania speaks with darken'd brow:
'Thou pratest here where thou art least;
This faith has many a purer priest,
And many an abler voice than thou.

'Go down beside thy native rill,
On thy Parnassus set thy feet,
And hear thy laurel whisper sweet
About the ledges of the hill.'

And my Melpomene replies,
A touch of shame upon her cheek:
'I am not worthy ev'n to speak
Of thy prevailing mysteries;

'For I am but an earthly Muse,
And owning but a little art
To lull with song an aching heart,
And render human love his dues;

'But brooding on the dear one dead,
And all he said of things divine,—
And dear to me as sacred wine
To dying lips is all he said,—

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

'I murmur'd, as I came along,
Of comfort clasp'd in truth reveal'd,
And loiter'd in the master's field,
And darkened sanctities with song.'

XXXVIII

With weary steps I loiter on,
Tho' always under alter'd skies
The purple from the distance dies,
My prospect and horizon gone.

No joy the blowing season gives,
The herald melodies of spring,
But in the songs I love to sing
A doubtful gleam of solace lives.

If any care for what is here
Survive in spirits render'd free,
Then are these songs I sing of thee
Not all ungrateful to thine ear.

XXXIX

Old warder of these buried bones,
And answering now my random stroke
With fruitful cloud and living smoke,
Dark yew, that graspest at the stones

And dippest toward the dreamless head,
To thee too comes the golden hour
When flower is feeling after flower;
But Sorrow,—fixt upon the dead,

And darkening the dark graves of men,—
What whisper'd from her lying lips?
Thy gloom is kindled at the tips,
And passes into gloom again.

XL

Could we forget the widow'd hour
And look on Spirits breathed away,
As on a maiden in the day
When first she wears her orange-flowe:!

When crown'd with blessing she doth rise
To take her latest leave of home,
And hopes and light regrets that come
Make April of her tender eyes;

And doubtful joys the father move,
And tears are on the mother's face,
As parting with a long embrace
She enters other realms of love;

Her office there to rear, to teach,
Becoming as is meet and fit
A link among the days, to knit
The generations each with each;

And, doubtless, unto thee is given
A life that bears immortal fruit
In those great offices that suit
The full-grown energies of heaven.

Ay me, the difference I discern!
How often shall her old fireside
Be cheer'd with tidings of the bride,
How often she herself return,

And tell them all they would have told,
And bring her babe, and make her boast,
Till even those that miss'd her most
Shall count new things as dear as old:

But thou and I have shaken hands,
Till growing winters lay me low;
My paths are in the fields I know,
And thine in undiscover'd lands.

XLI

Thy spirit ere our fatal loss
Did ever rise from high to higher,
As mounts the heavenward altar-fire,
As flies the lighter thro' the gross.

But thou art turn'd to something strange,
And I have lost the links that bound
Thy changes; here upon the ground,
No more partaker of thy change.

Deep folly! yet that this could be—
That I could wing my will with might
To leap the grades of life and light,
And flash at once, my friend, to thee!

For tho' my nature rarely yields
To that vague fear implied in death,
Nor shudders at the gulfs beneath,
The howlings from forgotten fields;

Yet oft when sundown skirts the moor
And inner trouble I behold,
A spectral doubt which makes me cold,
That I shall be thy mate no more,

Tho' following with an upward mind
The wonders that have come to thee,
Thro' all the secular to-be,
But evermore a life behind.

XLII

I vex my heart with fancies dim.
He still outstript me in the race;
It was but unity of place
That made me dream I rank'd with him.

And so may Place retain us still,
And he the much-beloved again,
A lord of large experience, train
To riper growth the mind and will:

And what delights can equal those
That stir the spirit's inner deeps,
When one that loves, but knows not, reaps
A truth from one that loves and knows?

XLIII

If Sleep and Death be truly one,
And every spirit's folded bloom
Thro' all its intervital gloom
In some long trance should slumber on;

Unconscious of the sliding hour,
Bare of the body, might it last,
And silent traces of the past
Be all the colour of the flower:

So then were nothing lost to man;
So that still garden of the souls
In many a figured leaf enrolls
The total world since life began;

And love will last as pure and whole
As when he loved me here in Time,
And all the spiritual prime
Rewaken with the dawning soul.

XLIV

How fares it with the happy dead?
For here the man is more and more;
But he forgets the days before
God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanish'd, tone and tint
And yet perhaps the hoarding sense
Gives out at times— he knows not whence—
A little flash, a mystic hint;

And in the long harmonious years—
If Death so taste Lethean springs—
May some dim touch of earthly things
Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

If such a dreamy touch should fall,
O turn thee round, resolve the doubt;
My guardian angel will speak out
In that high place, and tell thee all.

XLV

The baby new to earth and sky,
What time his tender palm is prest
Against the circle of the breast,
Has never thought that 'this is I:'

But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of 'I,' and 'me,'
And finds 'I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch.'

So rounds he to a separate mind
From whence clear memory may begin,
As thro' the frame that binds him in
His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,
Which else were fruitless of their due,
Had man to learn himself anew
Beyond the second birth of death.

XLVI

We ranging down this lower track,
The path we came by, thorn and flower,
Is shadow'd by the growing hour,
Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last
In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
The eternal landscape of the past;

A lifelong tract of time reveal'd,
The fruitful hours of still increase;
Days order'd in a wealthy peace,
And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,
A bounded field, nor stretching far;
Look also, Love, a brooding star,
A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

XLVII

That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet.
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet; "

And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each the other's good.
What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,
Before the spirits fade away,
Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
'Farewell! We lose ourselves in light.'

XLVIII

If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,
Were taken to be such as closed
Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
Then these were such as men might scorn.

Her care is not to part and prove;
She takes, when harsher moods remit,
What slender shade of doubt may flit,
And makes it vassal unto love;

And hence, indeed, she sports with words,
But better serves a wholesome law,
And holds it sin and shame to draw
The deepest measure from the chords;

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
But rather loosens from the lip
Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

IN MEMORIAM A. H. H.

XLIX

From art, from nature, from the schools,
Let random influences glance,
Like light in many a shiver'd lance
That breaks about the dappled pools.

The lightest wave of thought shall lisp,
The fancy's tenderest eddy wreath,
The slightest air of song shall breathe
To make the sullen surface crisp.

And look thy look, and go thy way,
But blame not thou the winds that make
The seeming-wanton ripple break,
The tender-pencil'd shadow play.

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears
Ay me, the sorrow deepens down,
Whose muffled motions blindly drown
The bases of my life in tears.

L

Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of Being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is rack'd with pangs that conquer trust;
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

LI

Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,
I had such reverence for his blame,
See with clear eye some hidden shame
And I be lessen'd in his love?

I wrong the grave with fears untrue:
Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
There must be wisdom with great Death:
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall:
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.

LII

I cannot love thee as I ought,
For love reflects the thing beloved;
My words are only words, and moved
Upon the topmost froth of thought.

'Yet blame not thou, thy plaintive song,'
The Spirit of true love replied;
'Thou canst not move me from thy side,
Nor human frailty do me wrong.

'What keeps a spirit wholly true
To that ideal which he bears?
What record? not the sinless years
That breathed beneath the Syrian blue:

'So fret not, like an idle girl,
That life is dash'd with flecks of sin.
Abide; thy wealth is gather'd in,
When Time hath sunder'd shell from pearl.'

LIII

How many a father have I seen,
A sober man among his boys,
Whose youth was full of foolish noise,
Who wears his manhood hale and green:

And dare we to this fancy give,
That had the wild oat not been sown,
The soil, left barren, scarce had grown
The grain by which a man may live?

Or, if we held the doctrine sound
For life outliving heats of youth,
Yet who would preach it as a truth
To those that eddy round and round?

Hold thou the good, define it well;
For fear divine Philosophy
Should push beyond her mark, and be
Procuress to the Lords of Hell.

LIV

O, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

LV

The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likeliest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life,

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

LVI

'So careful of the type?' but no.
From scarped cliff and quarried stone
She cries, 'A thousand types are gone;
I care for nothing, all shall go.

'Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death;
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more.' And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
 Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
 Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
 Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was loved indeed
 And love Creation's final law—
 Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
 With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
 Who battled for the True, the Just,
 Be blown about the desert dust,
 Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
 A discord. Dragons of the prime,
 That tare each other in their slime,
 Were mellow music match'd with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
 O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
 What hope of answer, or redress?
 Behind the veil, behind the veil.

LVII

Peace; come away: the song of woe
 Is after all an earthly song.
 Peace; come away: we do him wrong
 To sing so wildly: let us go.

Come; let us go: your cheeks are pale;
 But half my life I leave behind.
 Methinks my friend is richly shrined;
 But I shall pass, my work will fail.

Yet in these ears, till hearing dies,
 One set slow bell will seem to toll
 The passing of the sweetest soul
 That ever look'd with human eyes.

I hear it now, and o'er and o'er,
 Eternal greetings to the dead;
 And 'Ave, Ave, Ave,' said,
 'Adieu, adieu' for evermore.

LVIII

In those sad words I took farewell:
 Like echoes in sepulchral halls,
 As drop by drop the water falls
 In vaults and catacombs, they fell;

And, falling, idly broke the peace
 Of hearts that beat from day to day,
 Half-conscious of their dying clay,
 And those cold crypts where they shall cease.

The high Muse answer'd: 'Wherefore grieve
 Thy brethren with a fruitless tear?
 Abide a little longer here,
 And thou shalt take a nobler leave.'

LIX

O Sorrow, wilt thou live with me
 No casual mistress, but a wife,
 My bosom-friend and half of life;
 As I confess it needs must be?

O Sorrow, wilt thou rule my blood,
 Be sometimes lovely like a bride,
 And put thy harsher moods aside,
 If thou wilt have me wise and good?

My centred passion cannot move,
 Nor will it lessen from to-day;
 But I'll have leave at times to play
 As with the creature of my love;

And set thee forth, for thou art mine,
 With so much hope for years to come,
 That, howsoe'er I know thee, some
 Could hardly tell what name were thine.

LX

He past, a soul of nobler tone;
 My spirit loved and loves him yet,
 Like some poor girl whose heart is set
 On one whose rank exceeds her own.

He mixing with his proper sphere,
 She finds the baseness of her lot,
 Half jealous of she knows not what,
 And envying all that meet him there.

The little village looks forlorn;
 She sighs amid her narrow days,
 Moving about the household ways,
 In that dark house where she was born.

The foolish neighbours come and go,
 And tease her till the day draws by;
 At night she weeps, 'How vain am I!
 How should he love a thing so low?'

LXI

If, in thy second state sublime,
 Thy ransom'd reason change replies
 With all the circle of the wise,
 The perfect flower of human time;

And if thou cast thine eyes below,
 How dimly character'd and slight,
 How dwarf'd a growth of cold and night,
 How blanch'd with darkness must I grow!

Yet turn thee to the doubtful shore,
 Where thy first form was made a man;
 I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
 The soul of Shakespeare love thee more.

LXII

Tho' if an eye that's downward cast
 Could make thee somewhat blench or fail,
 Then be my love an idle tale
 And fading legend of the past;

And thou, as one that once declined,
When he was little more than boy,
On some unworthy heart with joy,
But lives to wed an equal mind,

And breathes a novel world, the while
His other passion wholly dies,
Or in the light of deeper eyes
Is matter for a flying smile.

LXIII

Yet pity for a horse o'er-driven,
And love in which my hound has part,
Can hang no weight upon my heart
In its assumptions up to heaven;

And I am so much more than these,
As thou, perchance, art more than I,
And yet I spare them sympathy,
And I would set their pains at ease.

So mayst thou watch me where I weep,
As, unto vaster motions bound,
The circuits of thine orbit round
A higher height, a deeper deep.

LXIV

Dost thou look back on what hath been,
As some divinely gifted man,
Whose life in low estate began
And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar,
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known
And lives to clutch the golden keys,
To mould a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,
Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope
The pillar of a people's hope,
The centre of a world's desire;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
When all his active powers are still,
A distant dearness in the hill,
A secret sweetness in the stream,

The limit of his narrower fate,
While yet beside its vocal springs
He play'd at counsellors and kings,
With one that was his earliest mate;

Who ploughs with pain his native lea
And reaps the labour of his hands,
Or in the furrow musing stands:
'Does my old friend remember me?'

LXV

Sweet soul, do with me as thou wilt;
I lull a fancy trouble-tost
With 'Love's too precious to be lost,
A little grain shall not be spilt.'

And in that solace can I sing,
Till out of painful phases wrought
There flutters up a happy thought,
Self-balanced on a lightsome wing;

Since we deserved the name of friends,
And thine effect so lives in me,
A part of mine may live in thee
And move thee on to noble ends.

LXVI

You thought my heart too far diseased;
You wonder when my fancies play
To find me gay among the gay,
Like one with any trifle pleased.

The shade by which my life was crost,
Which makes a desert in the mind,
Has made me kindly with my kind,
And like to him whose sight is lost;

Whose feet are guided thro' the land,
Whose jest among his friends is free,
Who takes the children on his knee,
And winds their curls about his hand:

He plays with threads, he beats his chair
For pastime, dreaming of the sky;
His inner day can never die,
His night of loss is always there.

LXVII

When on my bed the moonlight falls,
I know that in thy place of rest
By the broad water of the west
There comes a glory on the walls:

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals a silver flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years.

The mystic glory swims away,
From off my bed the moonlight dies;
And closing eaves of wearied eyes
I sleep till dusk is dipt in gray;

And then I know the mist is drawn
A lucid veil from coast to coast,
And in the dark church like a ghost
Thy tablet glimmers in the dawn.

LXVIII

When in the down I sink my head,
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, times my breath;
Sleep, Death's twin-brother, knows not Death,
Nor can I dream of thee as dead.

I walk as ere I walk'd forlorn,
When all our path was fresh with dew,
And all the bugle breezes blew
Réveillée to the breaking morn.

But what is this? I turn about,
I find a trouble in thine eye,
Which makes me sad I know not why,
Nor can my dream resolve the doubt:

But ere the lark hath left the lea
I wake and I discern the truth;
It is the trouble of my youth
That foolish sleep transfers to thee.

LXIX

I dream'd there would be Spring no more,
That Nature's ancient power was lost;
The streets were black with smoke and frost,
They chatter'd trifles at the door;

I wander'd from the noisy town,
I found a wood with thorny boughs;
I took the thorns to bind my brows,
I wore them like a civic crown;

I met with scoffs, I met with scorns
From youth and babe and hoary hairs:
They call'd me in the public squares
The fool that wears a crown of thorns.

They call'd me fool, they call'd me child:
I found an angel of the night;
The voice was low, the look was bright;
He look'd upon my crown and smiled.

He reach'd the glory of a hand,
That seem'd to touch it into leaf;
The voice was not the voice of grief,
The words were hard to understand.

LXX

I cannot see the features right,
When on the gloom I strive to paint
The face I know; the hues are faint
And mix with hollow masks of night;

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,
A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,
A hand that points, and palled shapes
In shadowy thoroughfares of thought;

And crowds that stream from yawning doors,
And shoals of pucker'd faces drive;
Dark bulks that tumble half alive,
And lazy lengths on boundless shores;

Till all at once beyond the will
I hear a wizard music roll,
And thro' a lattice on the soul
Looks thy fair face and makes it still.

LXXI

Sleep, kinsman thou to death and trance
And madness, thou hast forged at last
A night-long Present of the Past
In which we went thro' summer France.

Hadst thou such credit with the soul?
Then bring an opiate trebly strong,
Drug down the blindfold sense of wrong,
That so my pleasure may be whole;

While now we talk as once we talk'd
Of men and minds, the dust of change,
The days that grow to something strange
In walking as of old we walk'd

Beside the river's wooded reach,
The fortress, and the mountain ridge,
The cataract flashing from the bridge,
The breaker breaking on the beach.

LXXII

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
 And howlest, issuing out of night,
 With blasts that blow the poplar white,
 And lash with storm the streaming pane?

Day, when my crown'd estate begun
 To pine in that reverse of doom,
 Which sicken'd every living bloom,
 And blurr'd the splendour of the sun;

Who usherest in the dolorous hour
 With thy quick tears that make the rose
 Pull sideways, and the daisy close
 Her crimson fringes to the shower;

Who mightst have heaved a windless flame
 Up the deep East, or, whispering, play'd
 A chequer-work of beam and shade
 Along the hills, yet look'd the same,

As wan, as chill, as wild as now;
 Day, mark'd as with some hideous crime,
 When the dark hand struck down thro' time,
 And cancell'd nature's best: but thou,

Lift as thou mayst thy burthen'd brows
 Thro' clouds that drench the morning star,
 And whirl the ungarner'd sheaf afar,
 And sow the sky with flying boughs,

And up thy vault with roaring sound
 Climb thy thick noon, disastrous day;
 Touch thy dull goal of joyless gray,
 And hide thy shame beneath the ground.

LXXIII

So many worlds, so much to do,
 So little done, such things to be,
 How know I what had need of thee,
 For thou wert strong as thou wert true?

The fame is quenched that I foresaw,
The head hath missed an earthly wreath:
I curse not nature, no, nor death;
For nothing is that errs from law.

We pass; the path that each man trod
Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds.
What fame is left for human deeds
In endless age? It rests with God.

O hollow wraith of dying fame,
Fade wholly, while the soul exults,
And self-infolds the large results
Of force that would have forged a name.

LXXIV

As sometimes in a dead man's face,
To those that watch it more and more,
A likeness, hardly seen before,
Comes out—to some one of his race:

So, dearest, now thy brows are cold,
I see thee what thou art, and know
Thy likeness to the wise below,
Thy kindred with the great of old.

But there is more than I can see,
And what I see I leave unsaid,
Nor speak it, knowing Death has made
His darkness beautiful with thee.

LXXV

I leave thy praises unexpress'd
In verse that brings myself relief,
And by the measure of my grief
I leave thy greatness to be guess'd.

What practice howsoever expert
In fitting aptest words to things,
Or voice the richest-toned that sings.
Hath power to give thee as thou wert?

I care not in these fading days
To raise a cry that lasts not long,
And round thee with the breeze of song
To stir a little dust of praise.

Thy leaf has perish'd in the green,
And, while we breathe beneath the sun,
The world which credits what is done
Is cold to all that might have been.

So here shall silence guard thy fame;
But somewhere, out of human view,
Whate'er thy hands are set to do
Is wrought with tumult of acclaim.

LXXVI

Take wings of fancy, and ascend,
And in a moment set thy face
Where all the starry heavens of space
Are sharpen'd to a needle's end;

Take wings of foresight; lighten thro'
The secular abyss to come,
And lo, thy deepest lays are dumb
Before the mouldering of a yew;

And if the matin songs, that woke
The darkness of our planet, last,
Thine own shall wither in the vast,
Ere half the lifetime of an oak.

Ere these have clothed their branchy bowers
With fifty Mays, thy songs are vain;
And what are they when these remain
The ruin'd shells of hollow towers?

LXXVII

What hope is here for modern rhyme
To him who turns a musing eye
On songs, and deeds, and lives, that lie
Foreshorten'd in the tract of time?

These mortal lullabies of pain
May bind a book, may line a box,
May serve to curl a maiden's locks;
Or when a thousand moons shall wane

A man upon a stall may find,
And, passing, turn the page that tells
A grief, then changed to something else,
Sung by a long-forgotten mind.

But what of that? My darken'd ways
Shall ring with music all the same;
To breathe my loss is more than fame,
To utter love more sweet than praise.

LXXVIII

Again at Christmas did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
The silent snow possess'd the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas-eve.

The yule-log sparkled keen with frost,
No wing of wind the region swept,
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
Again our ancient games had place,
The mimic picture's breathing grace,
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

Who show'd a token of distress?
No single tear, no mark of pain:
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!
No—mixt with all this mystic frame,
Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry.

LXXIX

'More than my brothers are to me'—
Let this not vex thee, noble heart!
I know thee of what force thou art
To hold the costliest love in fee.

But thou and I are one in kind,
As moulded like in Nature's mint;
And hill and wood and field did print
The same sweet forms in either mind.

For us the same cold streamlet curl'd
Thro' all his eddying coves, the same
All winds that roam the twilight came
In whispers of the beauteous world.

At one dear knee we proffer'd vows,
One lesson from one book we learn'd,
Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turn'd
To black and brown on kindred brows.

And so my wealth resembles thine,
But he was rich where I was poor,
And he supplied my want the more
As his unlikeness fitted mine.

LXXX

If any vague desire should rise,
That holy Death ere Arthur died
Had moved me kindly from his side,
And dropt the dust on tearless eyes;

Then fancy shapes, as fancy can,
The grief my loss in him had wrought,
A grief as deep as life or thought,
But stay'd in peace with God and man.

I make a picture in the brain;
I hear the sentence that he speaks;
He bears the burthen of the weeks,
But turns his burthen into gain.

His credit thus shall set me free;
And, influence-rich to soothe and save,
Unused example from the grave
Reach out dead hands to comfort me.

LXXXI

Could I have said while he was here,
'My love shall now no further range;
There cannot come a mellow change,
For now is love mature in ear'!

Love, then, had hope of richer store:
What end is here to my complaint?
This haunting whisper makes me faint,
'More years had made me love thee more.'

But Death returns an answer sweet:
'My sudden frost was sudden gain,
And gave all ripeness to the grain
It might have drawn from after-heat.'

LXXXII

I wage not any feud with Death
For changes wrought on form and face;
No lower life that earth's embrace
May breed with him can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks;
And these are but the shatter'd stalks,
Or ruin'd chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare
The use of virtue out of earth;
I know transplanted human worth
Will bloom to profit, elsewhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart:
He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.

LXXXIII

Dip down upon the northern shore,
 O sweet new-year delaying long;
 Thou doest expectant nature wrong;
 Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons
 Thy sweetness from its proper place?
 Can trouble live with April days,
 Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
 The little speedwell's darling blue,
 Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
 Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,
 Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
 That longs to burst a frozen bud
 And flood a fresher throat with song.

LXXXIV

When I contemplate all alone
 The life that had been thine below,
 And fix my thoughts on all the glow
 To which thy crescent would have grown;

I see thee sitting crown'd with good,
 A central warmth diffusing bliss
 In glance and smile, and clasp and kiss,
 On all the branches of thy blood;

Thy blood, my friend, and partly mine;
 For now the day was drawing on,
 When thou shouldst link thy life with one
 Of mine own house, and boys of thine

Had babbled 'Uncle' on my knee;
 But that remorseless iron hour
 Made cypress of her orange flower,
 Despair of hope, and earth of thee.

I seem to meet their least desire,
To clap their cheeks, to call them mine.
I see their unborn faces shine
Beside the never-lighted fire.

I see myself an honour'd guest,
Thy partner in the flowery walk
Of letters, genial table-talk,
Or deep dispute, and graceful jest;

While now thy prosperous labour fills
The lips of men with honest praise,
And sun by sun the happy days
Descend below the golden hills

With promise of a morn as fair;
And all the train of bounteous hours
Conduct by paths of growing powers,
To reverence and the silver hair;

Till slowly worn her earthly robe,
Her lavish mission richly wrought,
Leaving great legacies of thought,
Thy spirit should fail from off the globe;

What time mine own might also flee,
As link'd with thine in love and fate,
And, hovering o'er the dolorous strait
To the other shore, involved in thee,

Arrive at last the blessed goal,
And He that died in Holy Land
Would reach us out the shining hand,
And take us as a single soul.

What reed was that on which I leant?
Ah, backward fancy, wherefore wake
The old bitterness again, and break
The low beginnings of content?

LXXXV

This truth came borne with bier and pall,
I felt it, when I sorrow'd most,
'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all—

O true in word, and tried in deed,
Demanding, so to bring relief
To this which is our common grief,
What kind of life is that I lead;

And whether trust in things above
Be dimm'd of sorrow, or sustain'd;
And whether love for him have drain'd
My capabilities of love;

Your words have virtue such as draws
A faithful answer from the breast,
Thro' light reproaches, half exprest,
And loyal unto kindly laws.

My blood an even tenor kept,
Till on mine ear this message falls,
That in Vienna's fatal walls
God's finger touch'd him, and he slept.

The great Intelligences fair
That range above our mortal state,
In circle round the blessed gate,
Received and gave him welcome there;

And led him thro' the blissful climes,
And show'd him in the fountain fresh
All knowledge that the sons of flesh
Shall gather in the cycled times.

But I remain'd, whose hopes were dim,
Whose life, whose thoughts were little worth,
To wander on a darken'd earth,
Where all things round me breathed of him.

O friendship, equal-poised control,
O heart, with kindest motion warm,
O sacred essence, other form,
O solemn ghost, O crowned soul!

Yet none could better know than I,
How much of act at human hands
The sense of human will demands
By which we dare to live or die.

Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine;

A life that all the Muses deck'd
With gifts of grace, that might express
All-comprehensive tenderness,
All-subtilising intellect:

And so my passion hath not swerved
To works of weakness, but I find
An image comforting the mind,
And in my grief a strength reserved.

Likewise the imaginative woe,
That loved to handle spiritual strife,
Diffused the shock thro' all my life,
But in the present broke the blow.

My pulses therefore beat again
For other friends that once I met;
Nor can it suit me to forget
The mighty hopes that make us men.

I woo your love: I count it crime
To mourn for any overmuch;
I, the divided half of such
A friendship as had master'd Time;

Which masters Time indeed, and is
Eternal, separate from fears:
The all-assuming months and years
Can take no part away from this:

But Summer on the streaming floods,
And Spring that swells the narrow brooks,
And Autumn, with a noise of rooks,
That gather in the waning woods,

And every pulse of wind and wave
Recalls, in change of light or gloom,
My old affection of the tomb,
And my prime passion in the grave:

My old affection of the tomb,
A part of stillness, yearns to speak:
'Arise, and get thee forth and seek
A friendship for the years to come.

'I watch thee from the quiet shore;
Thy spirit up to mine can reach;
But in dear words of human speech
We two communicate no more.'

And I, 'Can clouds of nature stain
The starry clearness of the free?
How is it? Canst thou feel for me
Some painless sympathy with pain?'

And lightly does the whisper fall:
' 'Tis hard for thee to fathom this;
I triumph in conclusive bliss,
And that serene result of all.'

So hold I commerce with the dead;
Or so methinks the dead would say;
Or so shall grief with symbols play
And pining life be fancy-fed.

Now looking to some settled end,
That these things pass, and I shall prove
A meeting somewhere, love with love,
I crave your pardon, O my friend;

If not so fresh, with love as true,
I, clasping brother-hands, aver
I could not, if I would, transfer
The whole I felt for him to you.

For which be they that hold apart
The promise of the golden hours?
First love, first friendship, equal powers
That marry with the virgin heart.

Still mine, that cannot but deplore,
That beats within a lonely place,
That yet remembers his embrace,
But at his footstep leaps no more,

My heart, tho' widow'd, may not rest
Quite in the love of what is gone,
But seeks to beat in time with one
That warms another living breast.

Ah, take the imperfect gift I bring,
Knowing the primrose yet is dear,
The primrose of the later year,
As not unlike to that of Spring.

LXXXVI

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
Of evening over brake and bloom
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below
Thro' all the dewy tassell'd wood,
And shadowing down the horned flood
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
The full new life that feeds thy breath
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
On leagues of odour streaming far,
To where in yonder orient star
A hundred spirits whisper 'Peace.'

LXXXVII

I past beside the reverend walls
In which of old I wore the gown;
I roved at random thro' the town,
And saw the tumult of the halls;

And heard once more in college fanes
The storm their high-built organs make,
And thunder-music, rolling, shake
The prophet blazon'd on the panes;

And caught once more the distant shout,
The measured pulse of racing oars
Among the willows; paced the shores
And many a bridge, and all about

The same gray flats again, and felt
The same, but not the same; and last
Up that long walk of limes I past
To see the rooms in which he dwelt.

Another name was on the door.
I linger'd; all within was noise
Of songs, and clapping hands, and boys
That crash'd the glass and beat the floor;

Where once we held debate, a band
Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
And labour, and the changing mart,
And all the framework of the land;

When one would aim an arrow fair,
But send it slackly from the string;
And one would pierce an outer ring,
And one an inner, here and there;

And last the master-bowman, he
Would cleave the mark. A willing ear
We lent him. Who but hung to hear
The rapt oration flowing free

From point to point, with power and grace
And music in the bounds of law,
To those conclusions when we saw
The God within him light his face,

And seem to lift the form, and glow
In azure orbits heavenly-wise;
And over those ethereal eyes
The bar of Michael Angelo.

LXXXVIII

Wild bird, whose warble, liquid sweet,
Rings Eden thro' the budded quicks,
O tell me where the senses mix,
O tell me where the passions meet,

Whence radiate: fierce extremes employ
Thy spirits in the darkening leaf,
And in the midmost heart of grief
Thy passion clasps a secret joy:

And I—my harp would prelude woe—
I cannot all command the strings;
The glory of the sum of things
Will flash along the chords and go.

LXXXIX

Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright;
And thou, with all thy breadth and height
Of foliage, towering sycamore;

How often, hither wandering down,
My Arthur found your shadows fair,
And shook to all the liberal air
The dust and din and steam of town:

He brought an eye for all he saw;
He mixt in all our simple sports;
They pleased him, fresh from brawling courts
And dusty purlieus of the law.

O joy to him in this retreat,
Immantled in ambrosial dark,
To drink the cooler air, and mark
The landscape winking thro' the heat!

O sound to rout the brood of cares,
The sweep of scythe in morning dew,
The gust that round the garden flew,
And tumbled half the mellowing pears!

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn:

Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon:

Nor less it pleased in livelier moods,
Beyond the bounding hill to stray,
And break the livelong summer day
With banquet in the distant woods;

Whereat we glanced from theme to theme.
Discuss'd the books to love or hate,
Or touch'd the changes of the state,
Or threaded some Socratic dream;

But if I praised the busy town,
He loved to rail against it still,
For 'ground in yonder social mill
We rub each other's angles down,

'And merge,' he said, 'in form and gloss
The picturesque of man and man.'
We talk'd: the stream beneath us ran,
The wine-flask lying couch'd in moss,

Or cool'd within the glooming wave;
And last, returning from afar,
Before the crimson-circled star
Had fallen into her father's grave,

And brushing ankle-deep in flowers,
We heard behind the woodbine veil
The milk that bubbled in the pail,
And buzzings of the honied hours.

XC

He tasted love with half his mind,
Nor ever drank the inviolate spring
Where nighest heaven, who first could fling
This bitter seed among mankind:

That could the dead, whose dying eyes
Were closed with wail, resume their life,
They would but find in child and wife
An iron welcome when they rise.

'Twas well, indeed, when warm with wine,
To pledge them with a kindly tear,
To talk them o'er, to wish them here,
To count their memories half divine;

But if they came who past away,
Behold their brides in other hands;
The hard heir strides about their lands,
And will not yield them for a day.

Yea, tho' their sons were none of these,
 Not less the yet-loved sire would make
 Confusion worse than death, and shake
 The pillars of domestic peace.

Ah dear, but come thou back to me!
 Whatever change the years have wrought,
 I find not yet one lonely thought
 That cries against my wish for thee.

XCI

When rosy plumelets tuft the larch,
 And rarely pipes the mounted thrush,
 Or underneath the barren bush
 Flits by the sea-blue bird of March;

Come, wear the form by which I know
 Thy spirit in time among thy peers;
 The hope of unaccomplish'd years
 Be large and lucid round thy brow.

When summer's hourly-mellowing change
 May breathe, with many roses sweet,
 Upon the thousand waves of wheat
 That ripple round the lonely grange,

Come; not in watches of the night,
 But where the sunbeam broodeth warm.
 Come, beauteous in thine after form,
 And like a finer light in light.

XCII

If any vision should reveal
 Thy likeness, I might count it vain
 As but the canker of the brain;
 Yea, tho' it spake and made appeal

To chances where our lots were cast
 Together in the days behind,
 I might but say, I hear a wind
 Of memory murmuring the past.

Yea, tho' it spake and bared to view
A fact within the coming year;
And tho' the months, revolving near,
Should prove the phantom-warning true,

They might not seem thy prophecies,
But spiritual presentiments,
And such refraction of events
As often rises ere they rise.

XCIII

I shall not see thee. Dare I say
No spirit ever brake the band
That stays him from the native land
Where first he walk'd when claspt in clay?

No visual shade of some one lost,
But he, the Spirit himself, may come
Where all the nerve of sense is numb;
Spirit to Spirit, Ghost to Ghost.

O, therefore from the sightless range
With gods in unconjectured bliss,
O, form from the distance of the abyss
Of ten-fold complicated change,

Descend, and touch, and enter; hear
The wish too strong for words to name,
That in this blindness of the frame
My Ghost may feel that thine is near.

XCIV

How pure at heart and sound in head,
With what divine affections bold
Should be the man whose thought would hold
An hour's communion with the dead.

In vain shalt thou, or any, call
The spirits from their golden day,
Except, like them, thou too canst say,
My spirit is at peace with all.

They haunt the silence of the breast,
Imaginations calm and fair,
The memory like a cloudless air,
The conscience as a sea at rest:

But when the heart is full of din,
And doubt beside the portal waits,
They can but listen at the gates,
And hear the household jar within.

xcv

By night we linger'd on the lawn,
For underfoot the herb was dry;
And genial warmth; and o'er the sky
The silvery haze of summer drawn;

And calm that let the tapers burn
Unwavering: not a cricket chirr'd;
The brook alone far-off was heard,
And on the board the fluttering urn;

And bats went round in fragrant skies,
And wheel'd or lit the filmy shapes
That haunt the dusk, with ermine capes
And woolly breasts and beaded eyes;

While now we sang old songs that peal'd
From knoll to knoll, where, couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field.

But when those others, one by one,
Withdrew themselves from me and night,
And in the house light after light
Went out, and I was all alone,

A hunger seized my heart; I read
Of that glad year which once had been,
In those fall'n leaves which kept their green,
The noble letters of the dead;

And strangely on the silence broke
The silent-speaking words, and strange
Was love's dumb cry defying change
To test his worth; and strangely spoke

The faith, the vigour, bold to dwell
On doubts that drive the coward back,
And keen thro' wordy snares to track
Suggestion to her inmost cell.

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touch'd me from the past,
And all at once it seem'd at last
The living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in this was wound, and whirl'd
About empyreal heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world,

Æonian music measuring out
The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance—
The blows of Death. At length my trance
Was cancell'd, stricken thro' with doubt.

Vague words! but ah, how hard to frame
In matter-moulded forms of speech,
Or ev'n for intellect to reach
Thro' memory that which I became;

Till now the doubtful dusk reveal'd
The knolls once more where, couch'd at ease,
The white kine glimmer'd, and the trees
Laid their dark arms about the field;

And suck'd from out the distant gloom
A breeze began to tremble o'er
The large leaves of the sycamore,
And fluctuate all the still perfume,

And gathering freshlier overhead,
Rock'd the full-foliaged elms, and swung
The heavy-folded rose, and flung
The lilies to and fro, and said,

'The dawn, the dawn,' and died away;
And East and West, without a breath,
Mixt their dim lights, like life and death,
To broaden into boundless day.

XCVI

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touch'd a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true;

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gather'd strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own,
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

XCVII

My love has talk'd with rocks and trees;
He finds on misty mountain-ground
His own vast shadow glory-crowned;
He sees himself in all he sees.

Two partners of a married life—
I look'd on these and thought of thee
In vastness and in mystery,
And of my spirit as of a wife.

These two—they dwelt with eye on eye,
Their hearts of old have beat in tune,
Their meetings made December June,
Their every parting was to die.

Their love has never past away;
The days she never can forget
Are earnest that he loves her yet,
Whate'er the faithless people say.

Her life is lone, he sits apart;
He loves her yet, she will not weep,
Tho' rapt in matters dark and deep
He seems to slight her simple heart.

He thrids the labyrinth of the mind,
He reads the secret of the star,
He seems so near and yet so far,
He looks so cold: she thinks him kind.

She keeps the gift of years before,
A wither'd violet is her bliss;
She knows not what his greatness is,
For that, for all, she loves him more.

For him she plays, to him she sings
Of early faith and plighted vows;
She knows but matters of the house,
And he, he knows a thousand things.

Her faith is fixt and cannot move,
She darkly feels him great and wise,
She dwells on him with faithful eyes,
'I cannot understand: I love.'

XCVIII

You leave us: you will see the Rhine,
And those fair hills I sail'd below,
When I was there with him; and go
By summer belts of wheat and vine

To where he breathed his latest breath,
That City. All her splendour seems
No livelier than the wisp that gleams
On Lethe in the eyes of Death.

Let her great Danube rolling fair
Enwind her isles, unmark'd of me;
I have not seen, I will not see
Vienna; rather dream that there,

A treble darkness, Evil haunts
The birth, the bridal; friend from friend
Is oftener parted, fathers bend
Above more graves, a thousand wants

Gnarr at the heels of men, and prey
By each cold hearth, and sadness flings
Her shadow on the blaze of kings.
And yet myself have heard him say,

That not in any mother town
With statelier progress to and fro
The double tides of chariots flow
By park and suburb under brown

Of lustier leaves; nor more content,
He told me, lives in any crowd,
When all is gay with lamps, and loud
With sport and song, in booth and tent,

Imperial halls, or open plain;
And wheels the circled dance, and breaks
The rocket molten into flakes
Of crimson or in emerald rain.

XCIX

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
So loud with voices of the birds,
So thick with lowings of the herds,
Day, when I lost the flower of men;

Who tremblest thro' thy darkling red
On yon swoll'n brook that bubbles fast
By meadows breathing of the past,
And woodlands holy to the dead;

Who murmurest in the foliaged eaves
A song that slights the coming care,
And Autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
To myriads on the genial earth,
Memories of bridal, or of birth,
And unto myriads more, of death.

O, wheresoever those may be,
Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
To-day they count as kindred souls;
They know me not, but mourn with me.

C

I climb the hill: from end to end
Of all the landscape underneath,
I find no place that does not breathe
Some gracious memory of my friend;

No gray old grange, or lonely fold,
Or low morass and whispering reed,
Or simple stile from mead to mead,
Or sheepwalk up the windy wold;

Nor hoary knoll of ash and haw
That hears the latest linnets trill,
Nor quarry trench'd along the hill
And haunted by the wrangling daw;

Nor runlet tinkling from the rock;
Nor pastoral rivulet that swerves
To left and right thro' meadowy curves,
That feed the mothers of the flock;

But each has pleased a kindred eye,
And each reflects a kindlier day;
And, leaving these, to pass away,
I think once more he seems to die.

CI

Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down,
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;

Unloved, the sunflower, shining fair,
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
The brook shall babble down the plain,
At noon or when the lesser wain
Is twisting round the polar star;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
And flood the haunts of fern and crane;
Or into silver arrows break
The sailing moon in creek and cove;

Till from the garden and the wild
A fresh association blow,
And year by year the landscape grow
Familiar to the stranger's child;

As year by year the labourer tills
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades;
And year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills.

CII

We leave the well-beloved place
Where first we gazed upon the sky;
The roofs that heard our earliest cry
Will shelter one of stranger race.

We go, but ere we go from home,
As down the garden-walks I move,
Two spirits of a diverse love
Contend for loving masterdom.

One whispers, 'Here thy boyhood sung
Long since its matin song, and heard
The low love-language of the bird
In native hazels tassel-hung.'

The other answers, 'Yea, but here
Thy feet have stray'd in after hours
With thy lost friend among the bowers,
And this hath made them trebly dear.'

These two have striven half the day,
And each prefers his separate claim,
Poor rivals in a losing game,
That will not yield each other way.

I turn to go; my feet are set
To leave the pleasant fields and farms;
They mix in one another's arms
To one poor image of regret.

CIII

On that last night before we went
From out the doors where I was bred,
I dream'd a vision of the dead,
Which left my after-morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,
And maidens with me; distant hills
From hidden summits fed with rills
A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang.
They sang of what is wise and good
And graceful. In the centre stood
A statue veil'd, to which they sang;

And which, tho' veil'd, was known to me,
The shape of him I loved, and love
For ever. Then flew in a dove
And brought a summons from the sea:

And when they learnt that I must go,
They wept and wail'd, but led the way
To where a little shallop lay
At anchor in the flood below;

And on by many a level mead,
And shadowing bluff that made the banks,
We glided winding under ranks
Of iris, and the golden reed;

And still as vaster grew the shore
And roll'd the floods in grander space,
The maidens gather'd strength and grace
And presence, lordlier than before;

And I myself, who sat apart
And watch'd them, wax'd in every limb;
I felt the thews of Anakim,
The pulses of a Titan's heart;

As one would sing the death of war,
And one would chant the history
Of that great race which is to be,
And one the shaping of a star;

Until the forward-creeping tides
Began to foam, and we to draw
From deep to deep, to where we saw
A great ship lift her shining sides.

The man we loved was there on deck,
But thrice as large as man he bent
To greet us. Up the side I went,
And fell in silence on his neck:

Whereat those maidens with one mind
Bewail'd their lot; I did them wrong:
'We served thee here,' they said, 'so long,
And wilt thou leave us now behind?'

So rapt I was, they could not win
An answer from my lips, but he
Replying, 'Enter likewise ye
And go with us:' they enter'd in.

And while the wind began to sweep
A music out of sheet and shroud,
We steer'd her toward a crimson cloud
That landlike slept along the deep.

CIV

The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
That wakens at this hour of rest
A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallow'd ground.

CV

To-night ungather'd let us leave
This laurel, let this holly stand:
We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.

Our father's dust is left alone
And silent under other snows:
There in due time the woodbine blows,
The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse
The genial hour with mask and mime;
For change of place, like growth of time,
Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
By which our lives are chiefly proved,
A little spare the night I loved,
And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,
Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm;
For who could keep an ancient form
Thro' which the spirit breathes no more?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast;
Nor harp be touch'd, nor flute be blown;
No dance, no motion, save alone
What lightens in the lucid east

Of rising worlds by yonder wood.
Long sleeps the summer in the seed;
Run out your measured arcs, and lead
The closing cycle rich in good.

CVI

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

CVII

It is the day when he was born,
A bitter day that early sank
Behind a purple-frosty bank
Of vapour, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves
To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies
The blast of North and East, and ice
Makes daggers at the sharpen'd eaves,

And bristles all the brakes and thorns
To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
Above the wood which grides and clangs
Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass
To darken on the rolling brine
That breaks the coast. But fetch the wine,
Arrange the board and brim the glass;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,
To make a solid core of heat;
Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat
Of all things ev'n as he were by;

We keep the day. With festal cheer,
With books and music, surely we
Will drink to him, whate'er he be,
And sing the songs he loved to hear.

CVIII

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:

What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, tho' with might
To scale the heaven's highest height,
Or dive below the wells of Death?

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be
Of sorrow under human skies:
'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

CIX

Heart-affluence in discursive talk
From household fountains never dry;
The critic clearness of an eye
That saw thro' all the Muses' walk;

Seraphic intellect and force
To seize and throw the doubts of man;
Impassion'd logic, which outran
The hearer in its fiery course;

High nature amorous of the good,
But touch'd with no ascetic gloom;
And passion pure in snowy bloom
Thro' all the years of April blood;

A love of freedom rarely felt,
Of freedom in her regal seat
Of England; not the schoolboy heat,
The blind hysterics of the Celt;

And manhood fused with female grace
In such a sort, the child would twine
A trustful hand, unmask'd, in thine,
And find his comfort in thy face;

All these have been, and thee mine eyes
Have look'd on: if they look'd in vain,
My shame is greater who remain,
Nor let thy wisdom make me wise.

CX

Thy converse drew us with delight,
The men of rathe and riper years;
The feeble soul, a haunt of fears,
Forgot his weakness in thy sight.

On thee the loyal-hearted hung,
The proud was half disarm'd of pride,
Nor cared the serpent at thy side
To flicker with his double tongue.

The stern were mild when thou wert by,
The flippant put himself to school
And heard thee, and the brazen fool
Was soften'd, and he knew not why;

While I, thy nearest, sat apart,
And felt thy triumph was as mine;
And loved them more, that they were thine,
The graceful tact, the Christian art;

Nor mine the sweetness or the skill,
But mine the love that will not tire,
And, born of love, the vague desire
That spurs an imitative will.

CXI

The churl in spirit, up or down
Along the scale of ranks, thro' all,
To him who grasps a golden ball,
By blood a king, at heart a clown;

The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil
His want in forms for fashion's sake,
Will let his coltish nature break
At seasons thro' the gilded pale:

For who can always act? but he,
To whom a thousand memories call,
Not being less but more than all
The gentleness he seem'd to be,

Best seem'd the thing he was, and join'd
Each office of the social hour
To noble manners, as the flower
And native growth of noble mind;

Nor ever narrowness or spite,
Or villain fancy fleeting by,
Drew in the expression of an eye
Where God and Nature met in light;

And thus he bore without abuse
The grand old name of gentleman,
Defamed by every charlatan,
And soil'd with all ignoble use.

CXII

High wisdom holds my wisdom less,
That I, who gaze with temperate eyes
On glorious insufficiencies,
Set light by narrower perfectness.

But thou, that fillest all the room
Of all my love, art reason why
I seem to cast a careless eye
On souls, the lesser lords of doom.

For what wert thou? some novel power
Sprang up for ever at a touch,
And hope could never hope too much,
In watching thee from hour to hour,

Large elements in order brought,
And tracts of calm from tempest made,
And world-wide fluctuation sway'd
In vassal tides that follow'd thought.

CXIII

'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise;
Yet how much wisdom sleeps with thee
Which not alone had guided me,
But served the seasons that may rise;

For can I doubt, who knew thee keen
In intellect, with force and skill
To strive, to fashion, to fulfil—
I doubt not what thou wouldst have been:

A life in civic action warm,
A soul on highest mission sent,
A potent voice of Parliament,
A pillar steadfast in the storm,

Should licensed boldness gather force,
Becoming, when the time has birth,
A lever to uplift the earth
And roll it in another course,

With thousand shocks that come and go,
With agonies, with energies,
With overthrowings, and with cries,
And undulations to and fro.

CXIV

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix
With men and prosper! Who shall fix
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire;
She sets her forward countenance
And leaps into the future chance,
Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain—
She cannot fight the fear of death.
What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst
All barriers in her onward race
For power. Let her know her place;
She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
If all be not in vain, and guide
Her footsteps, moving side by side
With Wisdom, like the younger child;

For she is earthly of the mind,
But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
O friend, who camest to thy goal
So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee,
Who grewest not alone in power
And knowledge, but by year and hour
In reverence and in charity.

CKV

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale,
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood, that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too, and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

CKVI

Is it, then, regret for buried time
That keenlier in sweet April wakes,
And meets the year, and gives and takes
The colours of the crescent prime?

Not all: the songs, the stirring air,
The life re-orient out of dust,
Cry thro' the sense to hearten trust
In that which made the world so fair.

Not all regret: the face will shine
Upon me, while I muse alone,
And that dear voice, I once have known,
Still speak to me of me and mine.

Yet less of sorrow lives in me
For days of happy commune dead,
Less yearning for the friendship fled
Than some strong bond which is to be.

CXVII

O days and hours, your work is this,
To hold me from my proper place,
A little while from his embrace,
For fuller gain of after bliss;

That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet,
And unto meeting, when we meet,
Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,
And every span of shade that steals,
And every kiss of toothed wheels,
And all the courses of the suns.

CXVIII

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant labouring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

CXIX

Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, not as one that weeps
I come once more; the city sleeps;
I smell the meadow in the street;

I hear a chirp of birds; I see
Betwixt the black fronts long-withdrawn
A light-blue lane of early dawn,
And think of early days and thee,

And bless thee, for thy lips are bland,
And bright the friendship of thine eye;
And in my thoughts with scarce a sigh
I take the pressure of thine hand.

CXX

I trust I have not wasted breath:
 I think we are not wholly brain,
 Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,
 Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death;

Not only cunning casts in clay:
 Let Science prove we are, and then
 What matters Science unto men,
 At least to me? I would not stay.

Let him, the wiser man who springs
 Hereafter, up from childhood shape
 His action like the greater ape,
 But I was *born* to other things.

CXXI

Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
 And ready, thou, to die with him,
 Thou watchest all things ever dim
 And dimmer, and a glory done.

The team is loosen'd from the wain,
 The boat is drawn upon the shore;
 Thou listenest to the closing door,
 And life is darken'd in the brain.

Bright Phosphor, fresher for the night,
 By thee the world's great work is heard
 Beginning, and the wakeful bird;
 Behind thee comes the greater light:

The market boat is on the stream,
 And voices hail it from the brink;
 Thou hear'st the village hammer clink,
 And see'st the moving of the team.

Sweet Hesper-Phosphor, double name
 For what is one, the first, the last,
 Thou, like my present and my past,
 Thy place is changed; thou art the same.

CXXII

Oh, wast thou with me, dearest, then,
While I rose up against my doom,
And yearn'd to burst the folded gloom,
To bare the eternal heavens again,

To feel once more, in placid awe,
The strong imagination roll
A sphere of stars about my soul,
In all her motion one with law?

If thou wert with me, and the grave
Divide us not, be with me now,
And enter in at breast and brow,
Till all my blood, a fuller wave,

Be quicken'd with a livelier breath,
And like an inconsiderate boy,
As in the former flash of joy,
I slip the thoughts of life and death;

And all the breeze of Fancy blows,
And every dewdrop paints a bow,
The wizard lightnings deeply glow,
And every thought breaks out a rose.

CXXIII

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars, hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true;
For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

CXXIV

That which we dare invoke to bless;
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess;

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye,
Nor thro' the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun:

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice, 'believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep,

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'

No, like a child in doubt and fear:
But that blind clamour made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach thro' nature, moulding men.

CXXV

Whatever I have said or sung,
Some bitter notes my harp would give,
Yea, tho' there often seem'd to live
A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet Hope had never lost her youth,
She did but look thro' dimmer eyes;
Or Love but play'd with gracious lies,
Because he felt so fix'd in truth:

And if the song were full of care,
He breathed the spirit of the song;
And if the words were sweet and strong
He set his royal signet there;

Abiding with me till I sail
To seek thee on the mystic deeps,
And this electric force, that keeps
A thousand pulses dancing, fail.

CXXVI

Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within the court on earth, and sleep
Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

CXXVII

And all is well, tho' faith and form
Be sunder'd in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
And justice, ev'n tho' thrice again
The red fool-fury of the Seine
Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,
And him, the lazar, in his rags!
They tremble, the sustaining crags;
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;
 The fortress crashes from on high,
 The brute earth lightens to the sky,
 And the great Æon sinks in blood,

And compass'd by the fires of Hell;
 While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
 O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
 And smilest, knowing all is well.

CXXVIII

The love that rose on stronger wings,
 Unpalsied when he met with Death,
 Is comrade of the lesser faith
 That sees the course of human things.

No doubt vast eddies in the flood
 Of onward time shall yet be made,
 And throned races may degrade;
 Yet, O ye mysteries of good,

Wild hours that fly with Hope and Fear,
 If all your office had to do
 With old results that look like new—
 If this were all your mission here,

To draw, to sheathe a useless sword,
 To fool the crowd with glorious lies,
 To cleave a creed in sects and cries,
 To change the bearing of a word,

To shift an arbitrary power,
 To camp the student at his desk,
 To make old bareness picturesque
 And tuft with grass a feudal tower;

Why, then my scorn might well descend
 On you and yours. I see in part
 That all, as in some piece of art,
 Is toil coöperant to an end.

CXXIX

Dear friend, far off, my lost desire,
So far, so near in woe and weal,
O loved the most, when most I feel
There is a lower and a higher;

Known and unknown; human, divine;
Sweet human hand and lips and eye;
Dear heavenly friend that canst not die,
Mine, mine, for ever, ever mine;

Strange friend, past, present, and to be;
Loved deeper, darklier understood;
Behold, I dream a dream of good,
And mingle all the world with thee.

CXXX

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What art thou then? I cannot guess;
But tho' I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less.

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mix'd with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

CXXXI

O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out the dust
A voice as unto him that hears,
A cry above the conquer'd years
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

O true and tried, so well and long,
Demand not thou a marriage lay;
In that it is thy marriage day
Is music more than any song.

Nor have I felt so much of bliss
Since first he told me that he loved
A daughter of our house, nor proved
Since that dark day a day like this;

Tho' I since then have number'd o'er
Some thrice three years; they went and came,
Remade the blood and changed the frame,
And yet is love not less, but more;

No longer caring to embalm
In dying songs a dead regret,
But like a statue solid-set,
And moulded in colossal calm.

Regret is dead, but love is more
Than in the summers that are flown,
For I myself with these have grown
To something greater than before;

Which makes appear the songs I made
As echoes out of weaker times,
As half but idle brawling rhymes,
The sport of random sun and shade.

But where is she, the bridal flower,
That must be made a wife ere noon?
She enters, glowing like the moon
Of Eden on its bridal bower.

On me she bends her blissful eyes
And then on thee; they meet thy look
And brighten like the star that shook
Betwixt the palms of Paradise.

O when her life was yet in bud,
He too foretold the perfect rose.
For thee she grew, for thee she grows
For ever, and as fair as good.

And thou art worthy, full of power;
As gentle; liberal-minded, great,
Consistent; wearing all that weight
Of learning lightly like a flower.

But now set out: the noon is near,
And I must give away the bride;
She fears not, or with thee beside
And me behind her, will not fear.

For I that danced her on my knee,
That watch'd her on her nurse's arm,
That shielded all her life from harm,
At last must part with her to thee;

Now waiting to be made a wife,
Her feet, my darling, on the dead;
Their pensive tablets round her head,
And the most living words of life

Breathed in her ear. The ring is on,
The 'Wilt thou?' answer'd, and again
The 'Wilt thou?' ask'd, till out of twain
Her sweet 'I will' has made you one.

Now sign your names, which shall be read,
Mute symbols of a joyful morn,
By village eyes as yet unborn.
The names are sign'd, and overhead

Begins the clash and clang that tells
 The joy to every wandering breeze;
 The blind wall rocks, and on the trees
 The dead leaf trembles to the bells.

O happy hour, and happier hours
 Await them. Many a merry face
 Salutes them—maidens of the place,
 That pelt us in the porch with flowers.

O happy hour, behold the bride
 With him to whom her hand I gave.
 They leave the porch, they pass the grave
 That has to-day its sunny side.

To-day the grave is bright for me,
 For them the light of life increased,
 Who stay to share the morning feast,
 Who rest to-night beside the sea.

Let all my genial spirits advance
 To meet and greet a whiter sun;
 My drooping memory will not shun
 The foaming grape of eastern France.

It circles round, and fancy plays,
 And hearts are warm'd and faces bloom,
 As drinking health to bride and groom
 We wish them store of happy days.

Nor count me all to blame if I
 Conjecture of a stiller guest,
 Perchance, perchance, among the rest,
 And, tho' in silence, wishing joy.

But they must go, the time draws on,
 And those white-favour'd horses wait;
 They rise, but linger; it is late;
 Farewell, we kiss, and they are gone.

A shade falls on us like the dark
 From little cloudlets on the grass,
 But sweeps away as out we pass
 To range the woods, to roam the park,

Discussing how their courtship grew,
And talk of others that are wed,
And how she look'd, and what he said,
And back we come at fall of dew.

Again the feast, the speech, the glee,
The shade of passing thought, the wealth
Of words and wit, the double health,
The crowning cup, the three-times-three,

And last the dance;—till I retire.
Dumb is that tower which spake so loud,
And high in heaven the streaming cloud,
And on the downs a rising fire:

And rise, O moon, from yonder down,
Till over down and over dale
All night the shining vapour sail
And pass the silent-lighted town,

The white-faced halls, the glancing rills,
And catch at every mountain head,
And o'er the friths that branch and spread
Their sleeping silver thro' the hills;

And touch with shade the bridal doors,
With tender gloom the roof, the wall;
And breaking let the splendour fall
To spangle all the happy shores

By which they rest, and ocean sounds,
And, star and system rolling past,
A soul shall draw from out the vast
And strike his being into bounds,

And, moved thro' life of lower phase,
Result in man, be born and think,
And act and love, a closer link
Betwixt us and the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half-akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

Whereof the man that with me trod
This planet was a noble type
Appearing ere the times were ripe,
That friend of mine who lives in God,

That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

PART V

SONGS AND OCCASIONAL PIECES

SONGS

I

A ROSE, but one, none other rose had I,
A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous fair,
One rose, a rose that gladden'd earth and sky,
One rose, my rose, that sweeten'd all mine air—
I cared not for the thorns; the thorns were there.

One rose, a rose to gather by and by,
One rose, a rose, to gather and to wear,
No rose but one—what other rose had I?
One rose, my rose; a rose that will not die,—
He dies who loves it,—if the worm be there.

1869

2

ASK ME no more: the moon may draw the sea;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape,
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;
But O too fond, when have I answer'd thee?

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?

I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:

Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!

Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are seal'd,

I strove against the stream and all in vain;

Let the great river take me to the main:

No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;

Ask me no more.

1847

3

A SPIRIT haunts the year's last hours
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers.

To himself he talks;

For at eventide, listening earnestly,

At his work you may hear him sob and sigh
 In the walks;
 Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks
 Of the mouldering flowers:
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
 As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
 An hour before death;
 My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
 At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,
 And the breath
 Of the fading edges of box beneath,
 And the year's last rose.
 Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
 Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
 Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
 Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

1830

4

COME not, when I am dead,
 To drop thy foolish tears upon my grave,
 To trample round my fallen head,
 And vex the unhappy dust thou wouldst not save.
 There let the wind sweep and the plover cry;
 But thou, go by.

Child, if it were thine error or thy crime
 I care no longer, being all unblest:
 Wed whom thou wilt, but I am sick of Time,
 And I desire to rest.
 Pass on, weak heart, and leave me where I lie;
 Go by, go by.

1851

5

IN LOVE, if Love be Love, if Love be ours,
Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers:
Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all.

It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

The little rift within the lover's lute,
Or little pitted speck in garner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulders all.

It is not worth the keeping; let it go:
But shall it? answer, darling, answer, no.
And trust me not at all or all in all.

1859

6

DUET

1. Is it the wind of the dawn that I hear in the pine overhead?
2. No; but the voice of the deep as it hollows the cliffs of the land.
1. Is there a voice coming up with the voice of the deep from the strand,
One coming up with a song in the flush of the glimmering red?
2. Love that is born of the deep coming up with the sun from the sea.
1. Love that can shape or can shatter a life till the life shall have fled?
2. Nay, let us welcome him, Love that can lift up a life from the dead.

1879

7

MARRIAGE MORNING

LIGHT, so low upon earth,
You send a flash to the sun.
Here is the golden close of love,
All my wooing is done.

Oh, the woods and the meadows,
 Woods where we hid from the wet,
 Stiles where we stay'd to be kind,
 Meadows in which we met!

Light, so low in the vale
 You flash and lighten afar,
 For this is the golden morning of love,
 And you are his morning star.
 Flash, I am coming, I come,
 By meadow and stile and wood,
 Oh, lighten into my eyes and heart,
 Into my heart and my blood!

Heart, are you great enough
 For a love that never tires?
 O heart, are you great enough for love?
 I have heard of thorns and briers.
 Over the thorns and briers,
 Over the meadows and stiles,
 Over the world to the end of it
 Flash for a million miles.

1867

8

NOW SLEEPS the crimson petal, now the white;
 Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
 Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font.
 The fire-fly wakens; waken thou with me.

Now droops the milk-white peacock like a ghost,
 And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë to the stars,
 And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
 A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
 And slips into the bosom of the lake:
 So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
 Into my bosom and be lost in me.

1847

9

O SWALLOW, Swallow, flying, flying South,
Fly to her, and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her, what I tell to thee.

O tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

O were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself, when all the woods are green?

O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown:
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
But in the North long since my nest is made.

O tell her, brief is life but love is long,
And brief the sun of summer in the North,
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make her mine,
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.

1850

10

OUR ENEMIES have fall'n, have fall'n: the seed,
The little seed they laugh'd at in the dark,
Has risen and cleft the soil, and grown a bulk
Of spanless girth, that lays on every side
A thousand arms and rushes to the sun.

Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n: they came;
 The leaves were wet with women's tears; they heard
 A noise of songs they would not understand;
 They mark'd it with the red cross to the fall,
 And would have strown it, and are fall'n themselves.

Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n; they came,
 The woodmen with their axes: lo the tree!
 But we will make it faggots for the hearth,
 And shape it plank and beam for roof and floor,
 And boats and bridges for the use of men.

Our enemies have fall'n, have fall'n; they struck;
 With their own blows they hurt themselves, nor knew
 There dwelt an iron nature in the grain;
 The glittering axe was broken in their arms,
 Their arms were shatter'd to the shoulder blade.

Our enemies have fall'n, but this shall grow
 A night of Summer from the heat, a breadth
 Of Autumn, dropping fruits of power; and roll'd
 With music in the growing breeze of Time,
 The tops shall strike from star to star, the fangs
 Shall move the stony bases of the world.

1847

II

RAIN, rain and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
 A young man will be wiser by and by;
 An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
 And the truth is this to me, and that to thee;
 And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows;
 Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
 From the great deep to the great deep he goes.

1869

12

TEARS, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange, as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

1847

13

THE splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
low, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O, hark, O, hear! how thin and clear
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
 They faint on hill or field or river:
 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
 And grow for ever and for ever.
 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
 And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

1850

14

TURN, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud;
 Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud;
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
 With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
 Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
 Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
 For man is man and master of his fate.

Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
 Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
 Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

1870

IN THE VALLEY OF CAUTERETZ

ALL along the valley, stream that flashest white,
 Deepening thy voice with the deepening of the night,
 All along the valley, where thy waters flow,
 I walk'd with one I loved two and thirty years ago.
 All along the valley, while I walk'd to-day,
 The two and thirty years were a mist that rolls away;
 For all along the valley, down thy rocky bed,
 Thy living voice to me was as the voice of the dead,
 And all along the valley, by rock and cave and tree,
 The voice of the dead was a living voice to me.

1861

HELEN'S TOWER

Written at the request of my friend, Lord Dufferin.

HELEN'S TOWER, here I stand,
Dominant over sea and land.
Son's love built me, and I hold
Mother's love in letter'd gold.
Love is in and out of time,
I am mortal stone and lime.
Would my granite girth were strong
As either love, to last as long!
I should wear my crown entire
To and thro' the Doomsday fire,
And be found of angel eyes
In earth's recurring Paradise.

1861

THE SPITEFUL LETTER

HERE, it is here, the close of the year,
And with it a spiteful letter.
My name in song has done him much wrong,
For himself has done much better.

O little bard, is your lot so hard,
If men neglect your pages?
I think not much of yours or of mine,
I hear the roll of the ages.

Rhymes and rhymes in the range of the times!
Are mine for the moment stronger?
Yet hate me not, but abide your lot;
I last but a moment longer.

This faded leaf, our names are as brief;
 What room is left for a hater?
 Yet the yellow leaf hates the greener leaf,
 For it hangs one moment later.

Greater than I—is that your cry?
 And men will live to see it.
 Well—if it be so—so it is, you know;
 And if it be so, so be it.

Brief, brief is a summer leaf,
 But this is the time of hollies.
 O hollies and ivies and evergreens,
 How I hate the spites and the follies!

1868

E. L., ON HIS TRAVELS IN GREECE

ILLYRIAN woodlands, echoing falls
 Of water, sheets of summer glass,
 The long divine Peneïan pass,
 The vast Akrokeraunian walls,

Tomohrit, Athos, all things fair,
 With such a pencil, such a pen,
 You shadow forth to distant men,
 I read and felt that I was there.

And trust me while I turn'd the page,
 And track'd you still on classic ground,
 I grew in gladness till I found
 My spirits in the golden age.

For me the torrent ever pour'd
 And glisten'd—here and there alone
 The broad-limb'd Gods at random thrown
 By fountain-urns;—and Naiads oar'd

A glimmering shoulder under gloom
Of cavern pillars; on the swell
The silver lily heaved and fell;
And many a slope was rich in bloom,

From him that on the mountain lea
By dancing rivulets fed his flocks,
To him who sat upon the rocks
And fluted to the morning sea.

1853

From PREFATORY POEM TO MY BROTHER'S
SONNETS

Midnight, June 30, 1879

MIDNIGHT—and joyless June gone by,
And from the deluged park
The cuckoo of a worse July
Is calling thro' the dark;

But thou art silent underground,
And o'er thee streams the rain,
True poet, surely to be found
When Truth is found again.

1879

THE DAISY

Written at Edinburgh

O LOVE, what hours were thine and mine,
In lands of palm and southern pine;
In lands of palm, or orange-blossom,
Of olive, aloe, and maize and vine.

What Roman strength Turbia show'd
In ruin, by the mountain road;

How like a gem, beneath, the city
Of little Monaco, basking, glow'd.

How richly down the rocky dell
The torrent vineyard streaming fell
To meet the sun and sunny waters,
That only heaved with a summer swell.

What slender campanili grew
By bays, the peacock's neck in hue;
Where, here and there, on sandy beaches
A milky-bell'd amaryllis blew.

How young Columbus seem'd to rove,
Yet present in his natal grove,
Now watching high on mountain cornice,
And steering, now, from a purple cove,

Now pacing mute by ocean's rim;
Till, in a narrow street and dim,
I stay'd the wheels at Cogoletto,
And drank, and loyally drank to him.

Nor knew we well what pleased us most;
Not the clipt palm of which they boast,
But distant colour, happy hamlet,
A moulder'd citadel on the coast,

Or tower, or high hill-convent, seen
A light amid its olives green;
Or olive-hoary cape in ocean;
Or rosy blossom in hot ravine,

Where oleanders flush'd the bed
Of silent torrents, gravel-spread;
And, crossing, oft we saw the glisten
Of ice, far up on a mountain head.

We loved that hall, tho' white and cold,
Those niched shapes of noble mould,
 A princely people's awful princes,
The grave, severe Genovese of old.

At Florence too what golden hours,
In those long galleries, were ours;
 What drives about the fresh Cascinè,
Or walks in Boboli's ducal bowers.

In bright vignettes, and each complete,
Of tower or duomo, sunny-sweet,
 Or palace, how the city glitter'd,
Thro' cypress avenues, at our feet.

But when we crost the Lombard plain
Remember what a plague of rain;
 Of rain at Reggio, rain at Parma,
At Lodi, rain, Piacenza, rain.

And stern and sad—so rare the smiles
Of sunlight—look'd the Lombard piles;
 Porch-pillars on the lion resting,
And sombre, old, colonnaded aisles.

O Milan, O the chanting quires,
The giant windows' blazon'd fires,
 The height, the space, the gloom, the glory!
A mount of marble, a hundred spires!

I climb'd the roofs at break of day;
Sun-smitten Alps before me lay.
 I stood among the silent statues,
And statued pinnacles, mute as they.

How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair,
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there
 A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys
And snowy dells in a golden air!

Remember how we came at last
To Como; shower and storm and blast
 Had blown the lake beyond his limit,
And all was flooded; and how we past

From Como, when the light was gray,
And in my head, for half the day,
 The rich Virgilian rustic measure
Of Lari Maxume, all the way,

Like ballad-burthen music, kept,
As on the Lariano crept
 To that fair port below the castle
Of Queen Theodolind, where we slept;

Or hardly slept, but watch'd awake
A cypress in the moonlight shake,
 The moonlight touching o'er a terrace
One tall Agavè above the lake.

What more? we took our last adieu,
And up the snowy Splugen drew;
 But ere we reach'd the highest summit
I pluck'd a daisy, I gave it you.

It told of England then to me,
And now it tells of Italy.
 O love, we two shall go no longer
To lands of summer across the sea;

So dear a life your arms enfold
Whose crying is a cry for gold;
 Yet here to-night in this dark city,
When ill and weary, alone and cold,

I found, tho' crush'd to hard and dry,
This nurseling of another sky
 Still in the little book you lent me,
And where you tenderly laid it by:

And I forgot the clouded Forth,
The gloom that saddens Heaven and Earth,
The bitter east, the misty summer
And gray metropolis of the North.

Perchance, to lull the throbs of pain,
Perchance, to charm a vacant brain,
Perchance, to dream you still beside me,
My fancy fled to the South again.

1855

TO E. FITZGERALD

Fitzgerald was seventy-five when this was written in 1883. He died shortly after, before it was published

OLD FRIZ, who from your suburb grange,
Where once I tarried for a while,
Glance at the wheeling orb of change,
And greet it with a kindly smile;
Whom yet I see as there you sit
Beneath your sheltering garden-tree,
And watch your doves about you flit,
And plant on shoulder, hand, and knee,
Or on your head their rosy feet,
As if they knew your diet spares
Whatever moved in that full sheet
Let down to Peter at his prayers;
Who live on milk and meal and grass;
And once for ten long weeks I tried
Your table of Pythagoras,
And seem'd at first 'a thing enskied,'
As Shakespeare has it, airy-light
To float above the ways of men,
Then fell from that half-spiritual height
Chill'd, till I tasted flesh again
One night when earth was winter-black,
And all the heavens flash'd in frost;
And on me, half-asleep, came back
That wholesome heat the blood had lost,

And set me climbing icy capes
 And glaciers, over which there roll'd
 To meet me long-arm'd vines with grapes
 Of Eshcol hugeness; for the cold
 Without, and warmth within me, wrought
 To mould the dream; but none can say
 That Lenten fare makes Lenten thought,
 Who reads your golden Eastern lay,
 Than which I know no version done
 In English more divinely well;
 A planet equal to the sun
 Which cast it, that large infidel
 Your Omar; and your Omar drew
 Full-handed plaudits from our best
 In modern letters, and from two,
 Old friends outvaluing all the rest,
 Two voices heard on earth no more;
 But we old friends are still alive,
 And I am nearing seventy-four,
 While you have touch'd at seventy-five,
 And so I send a birthday line
 Of greeting; and my son, who dipt
 In some forgotten book of mine
 With sallow scraps of manuscript,
 And dating many a year ago,
 Has hit on this, which you will take,
 My Fitz, and welcome, as I know,
 Less for its own than for the sake
 Of one recalling gracious times,
 When, in our younger London days,
 You found some merit in my rhymes,
 And I more pleasure in your praise.

1883

ALCAICS

O MIGHTY-MOUTH'D inventor of harmonies,
 O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
 God-gifted organ-voice of England,
 Milton, a name to resound for ages;

Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
 Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,
 Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
 Rings to the roar of an angel onset!
 Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
 The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
 And bloom profuse and cedar arches
 Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
 Where some refulgent sunset of India
 Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
 And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
 Whisper in odorous heights of even.

1863

HENDECASYLLABICS

O you chorus of indolent reviewers,
 Irresponsible, indolent reviewers,
 Look, I come to the test, a tiny poem
 All composed in a metre of Catullus,
 All in quantity, careful of my motion,
 Like the skater on ice that hardly bears him,
 Lest I fall unawares before the people,
 Waking laughter in indolent reviewers.
 Should I flounder awhile without a tumble
 Thro' this metrification of Catullus,
 They should speak to me not without a welcome,
 All that chorus of indolent reviewers.
 Hard, hard, hard is it, only not to tumble,
 So fantastical is the dainty metre.
 Wherefore slight me not wholly, nor believe me
 Too presumptuous, indolent reviewers.
 O blatant Magazines, regard me rather—
 Since I blush to belaud myself a moment—
 As some rare little rose, a piece of inmost
 Horticultural art, or half coquette-like
 Maiden, not to be greeted unbenignly.

1863

TO VIRGIL

*Written at the Request of the Mantuans for the Nineteenth Centenary of
Virgil's Death*

ROMAN VIRGIL, thou that singest
Ilion's lofty temples robed in fire
Ilion falling, Rome arising,
wars, and filial faith, and Dido's pyre;

Landscape-lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the 'Works and Days,'
All the chosen coin of fancy
flashing out from many a golden phrase;

Thou that singest wheat and woodland,
tilth and vineyard, hive and horse and herd;
All the charm of all the Muses
often flowering in a lonely word;

Poet of the happy Tityrus
piping underneath his beechen bowers;
Poet of the poet-satyr
whom the laughing shepherd bound with flowers;

Chanter of the Pollio, glorying
in the blissful years again to be,
Summers of the snakeless meadow,
unlaborious earth and oarless sea;

Thou that seest Universal
Nature moved by Universal Mind;
Thou majestic in thy sadness
at the doubtful doom of human kind;

Light among the vanish'd ages;
star that gildest yet this phantom shore;
Golden branch amid the shadows,
kings and realms that pass to rise no more;

Now thy Forum roars no longer,
 fallen every purple Cæsar's dome—
 Tho' thine ocean roll of rhythm
 sound forever of Imperial Rome—

Now the Rome of slaves hath perish'd,
 and the Rome of freemen holds her place,
 I, from out the Northern Island
 sunder'd once from all the human race,

I salute thee, Mantovano,
 I that loved thee since my day began,
 Wielder of the stateliest measure
 ever moulded by the lips of man.

1882

THE ROSES ON THE TERRACE

ROSE, on this terrace fifty years ago,
 When I was in my June, you in your May,
 Two words, 'My Rose,' set all your face aglow,
 And now that I am white and you are gray,
 That blush of fifty years ago, my dear,
 Blooms in the Past, but close to me to-day,
 As this red rose, which on our terrace here
 Glows in the blue of fifty miles away.

1889

'FRATER AVE ATQUE VALE'

Row us out from Desenzano, to your Sirmione row!
 So they row'd and there we landed—'O venusta Sirmio!'
 There to me thro' all the groves of olive in the summer glow,
 There beneath the Roman ruin where the purple flowers grow,
 Came that 'Ave atque Vale' of the Poet's hopeless woe,
 Tenderest of Roman poets nineteen hundred years ago,
 'Frater Ave atque Vale'—as we wander'd to and fro
 Gazing at the Lydian laughter of the Garda Lake below
 Sweet Catullus's all-but-island, olive-silvery Sirmio!

1880

JUNE BRACKEN AND HEATHER

To E.T.

THERE on the top of the down,
 The wild heather round me and over me June's high blue,
 When I look'd at the bracken so bright and the heather so brown,
 I thought to myself I would offer this book to you,
 This and my love together,
 To you who are seventy-seven,
 With a faith as clear as the heights of the June-blue heaven,
 And a fancy as summer-new
 As the green of the bracken amid the gloom of the heather.

1892

THE NEW TIMON AND THE POETS

WE KNOW him out of Shakespeare's art,
 And those fine curses which he spoke;
 The old Timon, with his noble heart,
 That, strongly loathing, greatly broke.

So died the Old: Here comes the new.
 Regard him: a familiar face:
 I thought we knew him: What, it's you,
 The padded man—that wears the stays—

Who killed the girls and thrilled the boys
 With dandy pathos when you wrote
 A lion, you, that made a noise,
 And shook a mane *en papillotes*.

And once you tried the Muses too;
You failed, Sir; therefore now you turn
To fall on those who are to you
As Captain is to Subaltern.

But men of long-enduring hopes,
And careless of what this hour may bring,
Can pardon little would-be POPES
And BRUMMELS, when they try to sting.

An Artist, Sir, should rest in Art,
And waive a letter of his claim;
To have the deep poetic heart
Is more than all poetic fame.

But you, Sir, you are hard to please;
You never look but half content;
Nor like a gentlemen at ease,
With moral breadth of temperament.

And what with spites and what with fears,
You cannot let a body be:
It's always ringing in your ears,
'They call this man as good as *me*.'

What profits now to understand
The merits of a spotless shirt—
A dapper boot—a little hand—
If half the little soul is dirt?

You talk of tinsel! Why, we see
The old mark of rouge upon your cheeks,
You prate of Nature! You are he
That spilt his life about the cliques.

A TIMON you! Nay, nay, for shame:
It looks too arrogant a jest—
The fierce old man—to take his name,
You bandbox. Off, and let him rest.

1846

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF
WELLINGTON

I

BURY the Great Duke
With an empire's lamentation;
Let us bury the Great Duke
To the noise of a mourning of mighty nation;
Mourning when their leaders fall,
Warrior's carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

II

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
Here, in streaming London's central roar.
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore.

III

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,
As fits an universal woe,
Let the long, long procession go,
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,
And let the mournful martial music blow;
The last great Englishman is low.

IV

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
Remembering all his greatness in the past.
No more in soldier fashion will he greet
With lifted hand the gazer in the street,
O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute:
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,
Whole in himself, a common good.
Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,

Our greatest yet with least pretence,
 Great in council and great in war,
 Foremost captain of his time,
 Rich in saving common-sense,
 And, as the greatest only are,
 In his simplicity sublime.
 O good gray head which all men knew,
 O voice from which their omens all men drew,
 O iron nerve to true occasion true,
 O fall'n at length that tower of strength
 Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!
 Such was he whom we deplore.
 The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
 The great World-victor's victor will be seen no more.

V

All is over and done.
 Render thanks to the Giver,
 England, for thy son.
 Let the bell be toll'd.
 Render thanks to the Giver,
 And render him to the mould.
 Under the cross of gold
 That shines over city and river,
 There he shall rest for ever
 Among the wise and the bold.
 Let the bell be toll'd,
 And a reverent people behold
 The towering car, the sable steeds.
 Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,
 Dark in its funeral fold.
 Let the bell be toll'd,
 And deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd;
 And the sound of the sorrowing anthem roll'd
 Thro' the dome of the golden cross;
 And the volleying cannon thunder his loss;
 He knew their voices of old.
 For many a time in many a clime
 His captain's-ear has heard them boom,
 Bellowing victory, bellowing doom.
 When he with those deep voices wrought,
 Guarding realms and kings from shame,

With those deep voices our dead captain taught
 The tyrant, and asserts his claim
 In that dread sound to the great name,
 Which he has worn so pure of blame,
 In praise and in dispraise the same,
 A man of well-attemper'd frame.
 O civic muse, to such a name,
 To such a name for ages long,
 To such a name,
 Preserve a broad approach of fame,
 And ever-echoing avenues of song.

VI

Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest,
 With banner and with music, with soldier and with priest,
 With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest?—
 Mighty Seaman, this is he
 Was great by land as thou by sea.
 Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,
 The greatest sailor since our world began.
 Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
 To thee the greatest soldier comes;
 For this is he
 Was great by land as thou by sea.
 His foes were thine; he kept us free;
 O give him welcome, this is he
 Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
 And worthy to be laid by thee;
 For this is England's greatest son,
 He that gain'd a hundred fights,
 Nor ever lost an English gun;
 This is he that far away
 Against the myriads of Assaye
 Clash'd with his fiery few and won;
 And underneath another sun,
 Warring on a later day,
 Round affrighted Lisbon drew
 The treble works, the vast designs
 Of his labour'd rampart-lines,
 Where he greatly stood at bay,
 Whence he issued forth anew,

And ever great and greater grew,
 Beating from the wasted vines
 Back to France her banded swarms,
 Back to France with countless blows,
 Till o'er the hills her eagles flew
 Beyond the Pyrenean pines,
 Follow'd up in valley and glen
 With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
 Roll of cannon and clash of arms,
 And England pouring on her foes.
 Such a war had such a close.
 Again their ravening eagle rose
 In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing wings,
 And barking for the thrones of kings;
 Till one that sought but Duty's iron crown
 On that loud Sabbath shook the spoiler down;
 A day of onsets of despair!
 Dash'd on every rocky square,
 Their surging charges foam'd themselves away;
 Last, the Prussian trumpet blew;
 Thro' the long-tormented air
 Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,
 And down we swept and charged and overthrew.
 So great a soldier taught us there
 What long enduring hearts could do
 In that world-earthquake, Waterloo!
 Mighty Seaman, tender and true,
 And pure as he from taint of craven guile,
 O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
 O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
 If aught of things that here befall
 Touch a spirit among things divine,
 If love of country move thee there at all,
 Be glad, because his bones are laid by thine!
 And thro' the centuries let a people's voice
 In full acclaim,
 A people's voice,
 The proof and echo of all human fame,
 A people's voice, when they rejoice
 At civic revel and pomp and game,
 Attest their great commander's claim
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
 Eternal honour to his name.

VII

A people's voice! we are a people yet.
Tho' all men else their nobler dreams forget,
Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers,
Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set
His Briton in blown seas and storming showers,
We have a voice with which to pay the debt
Of boundless love and reverence and regret
To those great men who fought and kept it ours.
And keep it ours, O God, from brute control;
O statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul
Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
And save the one true seed of freedom sown
Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
That sober freedom out of which there springs
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings;
For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just.
But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
Remember him who led your hosts;
He bade you guard the sacred coasts.
Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall;
His voice is silent in your council-hall
For ever; and whatever tempests lour
For ever silent; even if they broke
In thunder, silent; yet remember all
He spoke among you, and the Man who spoke;
Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,
Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power;
Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow
Thro' either babbling world of high and low;
Whose life was work, whose language rife
With rugged maxims hewn from life;
Who never spoke against a foe;
Whose eighty winters freeze with one rebuke
All great self-seekers trampling on the right:
Truth-teller was our England's Alfred named;
Truth-lover was our English Duke;
Whatever record leap to light
He never shall be shamed.

VIII

Lo! the leader in these glorious wars
 Now to glorious burial slowly borne,
 Follow'd by the brave of other lands,
 He, on whom from both her open hands
 Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,
 And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.
 Yea, let all good things await
 Him who cares not to be great
 But as he saves or serves the state.
 Not once or twice in our rough island-story,
 The path of duty was the way to glory.
 He that walks it, only thirsting
 For the right, and learns to deaden
 Love of self, before his journey closes,
 He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
 Into glossy purples, which outredden
 All voluptuous garden-roses.
 Not once or twice in our fair island-story
 The path of duty was the way to glory.
 He, that ever following her commands,
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
 Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
 His path upward, and prevail'd,
 Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
 Are close upon the shining table-lands
 To which our God Himself is moon and sun.
 Such was he: his work is done.
 But while the races of mankind endure
 Let his great example stand
 Colossal, seen of every land,
 And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure;
 Till in all lands and thro' all human story
 The path of duty be the way to glory.
 And let the land whose hearths he saved from shame
 For many and many an age proclaim
 At civic revel and pomp and game,
 And when the long-illumin'd cities flame,
 Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,
 With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
 Eternal honour to his name.

IX

Peace, his triumphs will be sung
 By some yet unmoulded tongue
 Far on in summers that we shall not see.
 Peace, it is a day of pain
 For one about whose patriarchal knee
 Late the little children clung.
 O peace, it is a day of pain
 For one upon whose hand and heart and brain
 Once the weight and fate of Europe hung.
 Ours the pain, be his the gain!
 More than is of man's degree
 Must be with us, watching here
 At this, our great solemnity.
 Whom we see not we revere;
 We revere, and we refrain
 From talk of battles loud and vain,
 And brawling memories all too free
 For such a wise humility
 As befits a solemn fane:
 We revere, and while we hear
 The tides of Music's golden sea
 Setting toward eternity,
 Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,
 Until we doubt not that for one so true
 There must be other nobler work to do
 Than when he fought at Waterloo,
 And Victor he must ever be.
 For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
 And break the shore, and evermore
 Make and break, and work their will,
 Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
 Round us, each with different powers,
 And other forms of life than ours,
 What know we greater than the soul?
 On God and Godlike men we build our trust.
 Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears;
 The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears;
 The black earth yawns; the mortal disappears;
 Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
 He is gone who seem'd so great.—

Gone, but nothing can bereave him
Of the force he made his own
Being here, and we believe him
Something far advanced in State,
And that he wears a truer crown
Than any wreath that man can weave him.
Speak no more of his renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast cathedral leave him,
God accept him, Christ receive him!

1852

CROSSING THE BAR

Although written in 1889, this poem is used to close all editions of the poet's works, according to his own request.

SUNSET and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no mourning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood that may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

1889